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ABSTRACT

The chapters in this edited volume cover a wide range of topics in theory, practice, and research and may be of interest to anyone concerned with the promotion of autonomy in language learning. There are 16 chapters divided into 5 parts. Part 1, "Setting the Agenda: Theory, Practice and Research," has 3 chapters: "Why Focus on Learning Rather than Teaching?" (David Little); "Why Focus on Learning Rather than Teaching? From Theory to Practice" (Leni Dam); and "Focus on Learning Rather than Teaching--With What Results?" (Lienhard Legenhausen). Part 2, "Some Examples of Practice," has 5 chapters: "Involving Learners in Their Own Learning--How to Get Started" (Tinne Seeman and Connie Tavares); "Learners' Favoured Activities in the Autonomous Classroom" (Hanne Thomsen); "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Interdependent Classroom" (Russell Whitehead); "Interdependence Can Help Independence" (Marion Geddes); and "Changing Attitudes Towards Treatment of Mistakes" (Leslie Bobb Wolff). Part 3, "Investigating Learners and Learning," has 4 chapters: "Learning Language Processes: Finding the Key to Learning Effectiveness and Learner Autonomy?" (Jane Nolan); "Towards Learner Autonomy in University Classrooms: The Role of Learners' Goals" (Jennifer Ridley); "Do They Mean What They Say? Learners Representations of Needs and Objectives" (Felicity Kjisik and Joan Nordlund); and "Self-Direction in Language Learning: What Does It Mean To Become Aware?" (Maria de los Angeles Clemente) Part 4, "Teachers and Teacher Training," has 3 chapters: "The Importance of Using the Target Language in the Classroom" (Lucie Betakova); "Focus on Interaction and Dialogue" (Jette Lentz) and "Developing Autonomy in Pre-Service Teacher Training Programme: A Case Study." (Jose Luis Vera-Batista). Part 5, "The Curriculum," consists of 1 chapter: "A Workshop to Develop Learner Autonomy" (Maria Candelaria Torres Diaz). Illustrations, tables, charts, and figures appear throughout the chapters. Each chapter contains references. (KFT)

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Focus on learning rather than teaching: why and how?

Papers from the IATEFL conference on learner independence, Kraków, 14–16 May 1998

Edited by
David Little, Leni Dam and Jenny Timmer

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Foreword

All but one of the papers collected in this book were presented at the conference *Focus on learning rather than teaching: why and how?* The conference was held in Kraków from 14 to 16 May 1998 under the auspices of the IATEFL Special Interest Group on Learner Independence. There were 130 registered participants, 99 from Poland and the rest from various parts of the world.

The idea of holding a conference in Kraków was born at the IATEFL conference on learner independence held in Brno, Czech Republic, in 1996. Leni Dam suggested that the next conference should be held in Poland because a number of Polish teachers had expressed an interest in learner independence when taking part in in-service courses organized in Denmark by Gerd Gabrielsen. Leni volunteered to organize the Kraków conference and began to plan the event.

This turned out to be unexpectedly difficult: a number of "official" contacts came to nothing. But then Leni turned to Lucya Staniczek, whom she had met in connection with school exchanges between Denmark and Poland. Lucya lives in Tychy, some fifty miles from Kraków. She, her family, and Sylwia Linkiewicz, a friend of the family, agreed to make all the practical arrangements for the conference. They secured the main hall of First High School, a private upper secondary school in Kraków, as the conference venue; they arranged for catering; they made hotel bookings for all the participants; they found the perfect location for the conference buffet provided by the British Council; they manned the registration desk at the beginning of the conference; and they travelled daily from Tychy to be at our disposal in case we needed their help. The hours they devoted to the organization of the conference and the miles they travelled are truly astounding. Our warmest thanks go to Lucya Staniczek, her family, and Sylwia Linkiewicz for their extraordinarily generous support and help. Without their efforts the conference could not have taken place.

We are also grateful to Krystyna Mnich, director of First High School, for providing us with an excellent conference venue, welcoming us warmly to her school, and arranging for the excellent school choir to contribute to the formal opening of the conference; to Hanne and Kenn Thomsen, who spent long hours setting up lists of participants and printing programmes; and to the British Council for funding the conference buffet.

The conference was a memorably stimulating event, so not surprisingly there was a general desire to preserve something of it in a volume of proceedings. David Little undertook to publish the proceedings under the CLCS imprint. We are grateful to the sponsors of his research project on autonomy in language learning, whose financial support has made publication possible. We are also grateful to Ema Ushioda for her untiring help with copy editing and proof reading.

David Little
Leni Dam
Jenny Timmer

January 2000

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Part I

Setting the agenda: theory, practice and research

The three papers in the first part of the book provide a framework for what follows. David Little begins by summarizing some of the more obvious consequences of traditional perceptions of knowledge, learning and the role of the teacher, then elaborates a social-interactive view of learning and considers the implications of such a view for pedagogy in general and second language pedagogy in particular. He argues that all truly effective learning entails the growth of autonomy in the learner, but that for most learners such growth requires the stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher. He concludes by briefly describing an English language programme for refugees in Ireland that is based on the theoretical position he has outlined.

Leni Dam's paper describes a pedagogy that reflects the same social-interactive understanding of learning. She defines a learning-centred environment as one in which the teacher's knowledge about language learning is combined with the learners' knowledge about themselves: an environment where activities are sometimes teacher-led and sometimes learner-led. Drawing on her own experience of the past twenty years, she describes some of the techniques, tools and activities that have helped her learners to become gradually more autonomous. While acknowledging the problems that her approach can pose for learners, their parents and other teachers, she reports that success far outweighs failure. The two learner testimonies with which she concludes confirm the argument with which she began: that an effective pedagogy reaches beyond its immediate aims and provides learners with skills they can apply in other domains outside the classroom.

In the third paper in this section Lienhard Legenhausen reports on a longitudinal empirical study that compared one of Leni Dam's classes with an English class in a German Gymnasium. He shows that, in this instance at least, the outcomes of a pedagogy intent on developing learner autonomy are measurably superior to those of a conventional textbook-based approach. The autonomous learners developed a larger vocabulary, a more flexible mastery of English grammar, and greater interactional proficiency. Lienhard Legenhausen concludes his paper with a practical example: a written text produced by one of Leni Dam's learners after three years of English. Like the practical examples that conclude the other two papers in this section, this serves to remind us of the larger educational purposes that lie behind attempts to develop learner autonomy.

Why focus on learning rather than teaching?

David Little

Introduction

Let me begin with a quotation from Seymour Papert's book *The Children's Machine,* which is an attempt to rethink the processes of schooling for the age of the computer:

> Why is there no word in English for the art of learning? Webster says that the word *pedagogy* means the art of teaching. What is missing is a parallel word for learning. In schools of education, courses on the art of teaching are often listed simply as "methods". Everyone understands that the methods of importance in education are those of teaching – these courses supply what is thought to be needed to become a skilled teacher. But what about methods of learning? What courses are offered for those who want to become skilled learners? The same imbalance can be found in words for the theories behind these two arts. "Theory of Instruction" and "Instructional Design" are among many ways of designating an academic area of study and research in support of the art of teaching. There are no similar designations for academic areas in support of the art of learning. Understandably: The need for such names has not been felt because there is so little to which they would apply. Pedagogy, the art of teaching, under its various names, has been adopted by the academic world as a respectable and an important field. The art of learning is an academic orphan. (Papert 1994, p.82)

Note that Papert is not arguing that we should abandon *pedagogy* in favour of *mathetics* (the word he proposes for the art of learning); his concern is rather with an imbalance that lies deep in our traditions of thought about education. The absence of a word like *mathetics* from the English lexicon is evidence that learning has traditionally been considered subordinate to teaching, something that follows naturally enough provided that teachers employ the right method. Against this tradition, Papert's argument implies that if our theories of teaching are to yield effective practice, they must be developed in interaction with appropriate theories of learning.

My purpose in this paper is to elaborate a version of this argument for second and foreign language pedagogy: an argument concerning what language teachers should do that is derived from a consideration of what is involved in learning a second or foreign language in formal educational environments. I believe that all truly effective learning entails the growth of autonomy in the learner as regards both the process and the content of learning; but I also believe that for most learners the growth of autonomy requires the stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher.

I begin by considering some of the more obvious consequences of a pedagogy that starts from a focus on teaching. Then I sketch a view of learning that takes account of the fact that learning is always situated in a socio-cultural context (as we shall see, such an approach entails a particular view of language and cognition). I go on to look at the implications of this view of learning for pedagogy in general and second language pedagogy in particular. Finally, I offer an example from my own recent experience of the dramatic difference between language teaching that is teacher-led in a traditional sense and language teaching that is strongly learner- and learning-centred.

Focus on teaching: the market model of education

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the English verb *to teach* has four meanings:

1. Enable or cause (person etc. *to* do) by instruction & training …
2. Give lessons at school or elsewhere in or on (subject, game, instrument, etc., *to* person, or w. double object) …
3. Give instruction to, educate; (intr.) be a ~er.
4. Explain, show, state by way of instruction …

These definitions clearly reinforce Papert's argument: they describe what teachers do, but without making any reference to learning. Again it is worth quoting Papert:

> Traditional education sees intelligence as inherent in the human mind and therefore in no need of being learned. This would mean that it is proper for School to teach facts, ideas, and values on the assumption that human beings (of any age) are endowed by nature with the ability to use them. (1994, pp.85f.)

This tradition coincides with what Salmon (1995, p.4) calls the market model of education, which assumes that knowledge and skills are commodities that can be pre-packaged by educational planners and textbook authors and handed over to learners by teachers. Such a view is encouraged by curricula that provide a detailed specification of what must be taught, and by textbooks that appear to be compendia of the knowledge and/or skills that have to be transferred to the learners. The history of language teaching in this century offers three obvious examples of this phenomenon. The grammar-translation method gave rise to curricula that specify the grammatical forms to be mastered and textbooks designed to give learners practice in using those forms; the audio-lingual/audio-visual method gave rise to curricula that specify the sentence patterns to be mastered and textbooks designed to give learners practice in manipulating those sentence patterns; and the communicative approach gave rise to curricula that specify the functions and notions to be learned and textbooks designed to give practice in deploying those notions in the performance of those functions.

When teachers use a textbook that has been designed to last for (say) a school year, they are likely to plan their courses in terms of "teaching time" rather than "learning time". That is, they will be concerned with the time they need to get through the twenty units in the textbook, rather than with the time their learners need in order to develop proficiency in this or that area of the target language. Similarly, they tend to be concerned with "coverage", measured in terms of what the curriculum or textbook specifies. Just how widespread these preoccupations are was borne in on me some years ago, when my colleague Seán Devitt and I gave a number of in-service seminars for language teachers in various European countries.

The purpose of the seminars was to introduce teachers to ways of using authentic printed texts for exploratory language learning, especially with learners at the lower levels of proficiency (for further details, see Little and Singleton 1991, Little 1994). We always started our seminars in the same way: the local organizers arranged for a class of language learners from a nearby school to come to the seminar, we divided them into groups of three or four, and they spent up to an hour and a half working through a chain of activities that required them to engage in various ways with an authentic newspaper text. Each group of learners was observed by two of the teachers attending the seminar; the remainder of the teachers went into another room, formed groups of three or four, and themselves worked through the chain of activities. When the learners had returned to their school, the teachers came together to discuss the activity chain. Those who had themselves worked through the activities usually found them interesting but thought them too difficult for their own learners; while those who had observed the learners usually expressed surprise that they had coped as well as they had. The teachers tended to find that the activities prompted interesting learning behaviour, but most thought that they could not use activities of this kind in their classroom: they would not have time, they had too much ground to cover. Working together or individually, Seán Devitt and I elicited responses of this kind in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic. Clearly, the market model of education is not the sole property of any one nation state or educational culture.

Focus on learning: a social-interactive view

If we wish to focus on teaching we necessarily take as our starting point a dictionary definition or some other cultural deposit, because teaching in formal contexts (schools, colleges, and so on) is a culturally conditioned activity. It is deeply rooted in the past history and present practices of particular societies. If we wish to focus on learning, on the other hand, we must start with the human organism, for the capacity to learn is one of its defining characteristics. The greater part of what we learn between cradle and grave, we learn implicitly, as a by-product of living. We mostly do not have a conscious intention to learn, and we are mostly unaware that learning is taking place. Developmentally and experientially we learn those things – knowledge and skills – that we need in order to be fully functional members of the social networks in which we find ourselves. This means, of course, that here too culture and social practices enter the picture: someone growing up in urban France does not acquire the same complex of knowledge and skills as someone growing up in rural China.

The contrast between the efficiency of developmental and experiential learning and the frequent failure of formal learning (or schooling) has often been remarked. One thinks, for example, of Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society* (1979), Carl Rogers's *Freedom to Learn for the 80's* (1983), Douglas Barnes's *From Communication to Curriculum* (1976), Roland Tharp and Ronald Gallimore's *Rousing Minds to Life* (1988), and John S. Mayher's *Uncommon Sense* (1990). Of these writers, Freire and Illich are concerned with the politics of schooling and the political implications of education; Rogers develops a psychology of learning that is continuous with his therapeutic convictions; while Barnes, Tharp and Gallimore, and Mayher are concerned with the processes of learning at school. But despite their differences of focus, these and other writers with similar concerns converge on a view of learning that emphasizes its essentially social and interactive nature. According to this view, the natural mode of developmental and experiential learning is interaction with other people, and our capacity to learn on our own derives from our experience of learning with and from others. Such a view has profound implications for our understanding of language and cognition as well as learning, and beyond that, of what it is to be human. Writing from the perspective of discursive psychology, Harré (1998, p.18) captures something of these implications in two doctrines:

> 1. Human beings acquire their typically human psychological characteristics, powers and tendencies in 'symbiotic' interactions with other human beings, the necessary conditions for which are to be found in human ethology. [...] The essential ethological basis, the human form of life, imposes a measure of universality on what a human being can become, while the essentially cultural nature of the processes by which a merely animate being becomes a person opens up a measure of diversity on what any human being actually becomes.

This doctrine asserts the inescapably social basis of our experience, which explains the fact of human diversity without denying the universal constraints imposed by human nature.

> 2. The psychological processes of mature human beings are essentially collective, and contingently privatized and individualized. The essential linguistic basis for all human practices imposes a measure of universality on what a human being can meaningfully do, since there are moral and material conditions for the very possibility of language, while the essentially cultural nature of the semantics and syntax of linguistic and other symbolic systems imposes a measure of diversity on what a human being actually does.

This doctrine asserts that we are social and interactive before we are individual and private. Language (or discourse) is what mediates between the social and the individual, the interactive and the private.

Taken together, Harré's two doctrines restate the essentials of Vygotsky's view of ontogenesis (Vygotsky 1978, 1986), which can be summarized in three principles. First, learning is the product of supported performance. This principle is encapsulated in Vygotsky's celebrated concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) as

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (1978, p.86)

Second, our higher cognitive functions (those that are unique to humans) are internalized from social interaction. For example, children gradually develop a capacity to *think* through problems for themselves from their experience of *talking* through problems with their parents, brothers and sisters, and peers. Third, and closely associated with the second principle, our capacity for "inner speech" (thought clothed in – often fragmentary – language) is internalized from our capacity for "egocentric speech" (talking to or for ourselves), which in turn derives from "social speech" (talking to others).

These three principles carry three implications which are fundamental to the focus on learning that I wish to take as the basis for the rest of this paper. First, successful learning entails autonomy ("independent problem solving"), but autonomy has to grow out of dependence ("under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"). Second, the more expert partner in problem-solving activity has an explicitly pedagogical role. It is easy to overlook this when so much discussion of developmental–experiential learning emphasizes its overwhelmingly implicit nature. But we should never underestimate the extent to which parents "teach" (that is, explicitly draw attention to) the "correct" (that is, socially and culturally appropriate) forms of the mother tongue, or straightforwardly instruct their children how to behave in particular social contexts. Third, language (or discourse) is not only the substance in which we articulate skills and give shape to bodies of knowledge, but the channel through which skills and knowledge are mediated and the tool by means of which they are mastered. Language, in other words, is inseparable from other forms of social behaviour and a major factor in determining our sense of self.

This social-interactive view of language, learning and cognition has been explored, both theoretically and empirically/experimentally, from a number of perspectives – for example, "distributed cognition" (Salomon 1993), "interactive minds" (Baltes and Staudinger 1996), a "constructionist" view of learning (Kafai and Resnick 1996), a "socio-cultural" view of education (Tharp and Gallimore 1988, Moll 1990, Forman, Minick and Stone 1993), and a "dialogic" view of language (Markovà and Foppa 1990). A full exploration of the focus on learning that I have adopted here would need to take account of all this work and more besides; but for the purposes of this paper my brief sketch of Vygotskian principles must suffice.

Towards a learner- and learning-centred pedagogy

Following my interpretation of Vygotsky, a pedagogy founded on social-interactive principles will be guided by three fundamental considerations: that autonomy is the natural goal of learning; that *all* purposeful interaction contains a significant "pedagogical" element; and that language is at once the medium through which interaction is conducted and the tool with which it is shaped. This part of the paper is an elaboration on these considerations.

As we have seen, Vygotsky identifies autonomy ("independent problem solving") as the goal of learning, but insists that it grows out of dependence on others ("under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"). According to this view, progress in learning is a matter of achieving autonomy at one level in order to be capable of dependence at the next level, where in turn autonomy must be achieved in order to move on again. Consequently, autonomy is integral to the process of learning, an immediate as well as an ultimate goal; and the teacher must at all times be intent on identifying opportunities of "letting go", or handing over control to her learners, in order that they may progress towards a new phase of dependence. The act of "letting go" must always be made explicit, so that it feeds into learners' collaborative and individual reflection on the learning process.

The symbiotic relation between autonomy and dependence entails that at any particular point learners will be capable of performing some tasks independently but will need assistance in order to perform other tasks. Especially in the earliest stages of learning, there will be some areas in which *all* learners need the teacher's support. But individual differences will ensure that learners develop at different rates and with different emphases, which in turn means that almost from the beginning they will be able to support one another in task performance. For this reason group work plays a central role in any pedagogy derived from Vygotskian principles. In the collaborative performance of learning tasks the "pedagogical" role that in Vygosky's definition of the zone of proximal development is played by adults or more capable peers, is assumed first by one learner and then by another in a complex play of interdependence.

Dominant traditions in psychology and education treat cognition and learning as internal to the individual; and it is clear that any substantial attempt to learn within a formal educational environment requires a significant individual effort. It is thus not surprising that many teachers think of their classes as collections of individual learners who may sometimes come together in small groups for purposes of practice; not surprising either that they assume individual learning to be somehow more economical, and to that extent more effective, than group work. By contrast, a social-interactive view of learning identifies the group as the primary locus of learning activity and individual learning as a matter of consolidating on past and preparing for future group learning.

While insisting on this point, it is important to insist also that there can be bad as well as good group work. Two hours of purposeful discussion between colleagues can draw together the threads of a collaborative research project, determine the direction of future work, and give everyone a new appetite for individual effort. On the other hand, two hours of ill-prepared and unfocussed talk can undermine a collaborative project and leave everyone feeling thoroughly frustrated and uncooperative. The individual's ability to engage successfully in group work must not be taken for granted. It depends on a complex of social and cognitive skills which the different members of any group will possess in sometimes widely varying degrees. Thus knowing how to manage the gradual development of positive group dynamics is one of the primary skills required of a good teacher.

Social interaction is a discursive activity, and talk is central to the process of social-interactive learning. But as Mercer (1995) has shown, not all forms of talk (which is only another way of saying "not all forms of group work") necessarily produce learning. If group work is to succeed, all participants must share a common purpose, and that can be generated only by shared understanding. For this reason the teacher must anchor learning activities in the learners' present situation – social, cultural, developmental and cognitive. The means by which she does this are, again, discursive; above all it is a matter of introducing new knowledge and skills via talk that the learners themselves can participate in. In this connection Salmon (1995, p.37) cites Barnes's (1986, p.68) example of a physics teacher who used a wholly untechnical vocabulary as a way of encouraging his pupils to formulate for themselves what was happening in the classroom experiment:

> This is almost the same as that one … a slightly different arrangement … cut in half … you see it? … little tin can … silver thing in the middle … silver thing with circles on it? … that's that tin can … tin can just like that one … all right … on a good day then what is going to happen to the shape of that? Is it going to go … down? … Do you know? … See what happens to the pointer. Well that pointer is going to be connected …

Salmon (ibid.) comments as follows:

> […] the pupils in this lesson were boys and girls of quite limited ability. Nevertheless, they became actively involved in this physics demonstration, attending closely and questioning the teacher about what they saw. This must, [Barnes] suggests, have been related to the way their teacher talked. The importance of his language was not just that, though informal, it was exactly adjusted to the apparatus. More significantly, this linguistic mode carried a clear message for these pupils; that he was interested in their own understandings and their attempts to extend them.

The right kind of classroom talk, whether between teacher and learners or within learner groups, promotes learning because it engages individual learners in discursive processes that begin from their present situation and thus allow them to learn "from the inside out". It acknowledges that learning enlarges the individual's identity; at the same time, it fosters the development of autonomy to the extent that it encourages reflection, both on the immediate learning task and the larger learning process of which that task is part.

Everything I have said so far about the pedagogical implications of a social-interactive view of learning applies to formal learning in general. But clearly there is a difference between (say) physics and history on the one hand and a foreign language on the other. Learning physics and history entails mastering procedures as well as content or facts, but the procedures are mediated and negotiated by means of the learners' mother tongue. In the case of a foreign language, procedures and content are difficult to separate: both *are* the foreign language. Accordingly, the first implication of the social-interactive view of learning for the second or foreign language classroom is that the target language *must* be the preferred channel of communication, the medium in which learning takes place.

This may be uncontroversial when advanced learners are being taught by a native speaker of the target language, or when the learners themselves do not all share the same mother tongue. But it can be a serious problem for teachers at school, where learners usually speak the same mother tongue and may be unenthusiastic about attempting to speak the target language. There is, however, no way around this problem. Communicative proficiency in any language is a procedural skill, and the only way in which we develop procedural skills is by using them to the fullest possible extent of our current capacity. There are two ways in which the teacher must help her learners, especially at beginner level. First, she must provide them with easily mastered linguistic resources that enable them to begin to express meanings relevant to themselves and thus to launch themselves on a process of learning "from the inside out" (for a specific example that is infinitely adaptable to different contexts, see Dam 1995). Secondly, she must engage and support them in interactive discourse in much the same way as parents engage and support their children in the earliest stages of first language acquisition: she must enable them to share in the collaborative construction of meaning and at the same time provide them with input by expanding, adjusting and correcting their utterances (for an example that rewards intensive study, see the video made some years ago by Hanne Thomsen; Thomsen and Gabrielsen 1991).

But learning a language is not only a matter of practising a procedural skill; it also involves reflection and analysis of two distinct though related kinds. The discursive processes that characterize a pedagogy derived from a social-interactive view of learning are themselves apt, as I have already argued, to stimulate reflection on the performance of specific learning tasks and the progress of the learning process overall. This is no less important in the foreign language classroom than it is in the physics laboratory. Indeed, in a sense it is more important, for the capacity for reflexive language use – talk about talk – is central to proficiency in any language. At the same time, however, language learners need to develop a capacity to reflect analytically on the forms of their target language. This is partly a matter of analytical or explicit learning, for example in relation to a particular area of vocabulary, or the politeness forms appropriate in specific social circumstances; but it is also a matter of reflected language use. When we are engaged in spontaneous conversation we do not have much time to choose our words or shape and reshape our sentences; but communicative tasks that are not a matter of immediate response allow us time for planning and editing, both of which depend on our capacity to disengage from language as process in order to consider language as object (for a fuller discussion, see Little 1996). Written language is central to language learning not only because learners need to be able to perform written tasks, but because written language positively invites us to treat it as an object. What is more, if learners have already mastered the technology of literacy in their mother tongue, the use of writing from the earliest stages of second or foreign language learning not only encourages an explicit interest in linguistic form but allows the learners to use written prompts and cues to support the development of social or interactive speech.

According to Vygotsky, first language acquisition is centrally implicated in the development of higher cognitive functions. Social speech provides a model for egocentric speech, which is internalized as inner speech; language is the tool by which we learn and practise self-regulated problem solving. One sign of internalized proficiency in a second or foreign language is the ability to use the language spontaneously, without prior reflection; another sign is the ability to think – or generate "inner speech" – in the target language. This latter ability is fundamental to the performance of non-immediate communicative tasks in the mother tongue, especially written tasks. The social speech that is the medium of group work in the second or foreign language classroom supports the development of the individual learner's capacity for egocentric speech and, more importantly, inner speech. But for this very reason, social speech can also enable learners to compensate interdependently for an underdeveloped capacity for inner speech. That is one of the reasons why collaborative writing tasks often yield texts that are vastly superior to anything any one member of the group could produce individually.

Finally, according to the social-interactive view, learning is a matter of culture construction. When the medium and content of learning are a second or foreign language, the culture that is constructed will necessarily be hybrid, derived partly from the learners' immediate situation, to which the target language is alien, and partly from the culture mediated in and through the target language. One of the ways in which we measure proficiency in second or foreign language learners is the extent to which their linguistic output resembles that of a native speaker. But we should never forget that second or foreign language speakers are by definition outsiders; indeed, social-interactive principles require that we positively value the hybrid culture of the language classroom as a dynamic phenomenon which gradually moves closer to the culture of the target language as our learners become more proficient.

Conclusion

The central argument of this paper has necessarily been theoretical and abstract. In conclusion let me give you a concrete example that shows how theory translates into practice:

For a number of years the Irish government has implemented a refugee programme under the auspices of its Refugee Agency. To begin with, refugees were sent to private language schools so that they could develop their proficiency in English before seeking vocational training or employment. The schools gave them classes based on *Headway* and most of the refugees made little progress towards getting jobs. About a year ago the Centre for Language and Communication Studies began to collaborate with Fás, the national training agency, in providing English courses for refugees who wished to be admitted to a vocational training course or were actively seeking employment. There is no pre-established curriculum for these courses, and they are not based on a textbook. Instead, the teacher negotiates a curriculum – or rather a series of curricula – with the learners, and learning proceeds via engagement with authentic texts and real-life tasks. Typical elements in these negotiated curricula are: preparing a *curriculum vitae*, applying for a job, preparing for an interview, coping with officialdom, making telephone calls, and so on. The learners work in groups according to their particular interests, and the teacher acts as facilitator, helping the learners to find appropriate learning materials, devise appropriate learning tasks, and evaluate learning outcomes. The English that is learnt is immediately used in the world outside the classroom, which provides a constant flow of feedback to help the refugees evaluate their learning. The success of this approach is demonstrated by the fact that 85% of the refugees who have followed our 15-week programme are either in full-time employment or following vocational training courses that are likely to lead to full-time employment.

We recently held an information day to select students for our next course. My colleague Barbara Simpson (cf. Simpson 1998) asked one of the refugees completing our current course to talk to potential applicants about his language learning experience since he came to Ireland. He explained to them that at first he had attended a private language school. He had found the classes (based on *Headway*) largely irrelevant to his needs and thus boring, and it cost him a great deal of effort to travel from his home in the suburbs to the language school in the city centre. By contrast, the classes he had attended in the Fás training centre had been immediately motivating because he had been involved in deciding what his learning should focus on; and his positive motivation had been reinforced because his learning had been put to immediate practical use. What is more, through sustained interaction with other members of the class he had learned to be realistic both in his expectations and in the demands that he made of himself. As a consequence the course had given a significant boost to his self-esteem as well as qualifying him for further training.

It is not only our refugee learners who have benefited from this implementation of what we think of as the social-interactive approach. The teachers too have felt themselves liberated from repetitive drudgery, and their confidence has expanded as they have responded to the challenge of focussing on learning rather than teaching. Clearly, the social-interactive approach raises serious doubts about established curricula and assessment procedures, and this is bound to create difficulties for many teachers. But some of them at least will feel that this is a small price to pay in return for the boost that their own autonomy will receive as they work to support their learners' progress towards autonomy.

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Why focus on learning rather than teaching? From theory to practice

Leni Dam

Introduction

This paper presents a possible way of organizing an environment where the focus is on learning rather than teaching. In my account, I will describe some tools that have proved useful to myself as well as other teachers with whom I have worked, and elaborate how I have established a learning environment. As will become clear, this is a learning environment that changes all the time according to the needs of my learners as well as myself. Constructing it is therefore a continuous process. For this reason, the account I offer here is not *the* answer to how it might be done. And it is definitely not meant to be a recipe for how to do it. Nevertheless, I hope that relating the content of this paper to their own teaching and learning experience will make readers feel either reassured in their current practice, or else inspired to try out new ideas in their own context.

Why focus on learning rather than teaching?

David Little offers detailed answers to this question in his paper in this volume. However, I would like just to highlight a few reasons which are important to me. Let me first of all mention the fact that learners do not necessarily learn what we believe ourselves to be teaching – a fact stressed in the following quotation from Douglas Barnes's book *From Communication to Curriculum* (1976, p.83): "To learn is to develop relationships between what the learner knows already and the new knowledge presented to him, and this can only be done by the learner himself."

Another important reason is the fact that no school or even university can provide its pupils with all the knowledge and all the skills they will need in their adult lives. What we *can* do is give our learners an awareness of how they think and how they learn – an awareness which hopefully will help them come to an understanding of themselves and thus increase their self-esteem. This is a prerequisite for enabling them to cope with life and engage in new learning experiences as socially responsible persons. If we succeed in this, then a virtuous circle has been established, entailing

- active involvement in the learning process;
- improved insight into how to learn and what to learn;
- improved self-esteem;
- increased involvement in the learning process.

For these reasons, I believe that we are obliged to focus on learning rather than teaching, hoping to provide our learners with action knowledge rather than school knowledge, to use Barnes's terms (1976, p.83):

> School knowledge is the knowledge which someone else presents to us. We partly grasp it, enough to answer the teacher's questions, to do exercises, or to answer examination questions, but it remains someone else's knowledge, not ours. If we never use this knowledge we probably forget it. In so far as we use knowledge for our own purposes however we begin to incorporate it into our view of the world, and to use parts of it to cope with the exigencies of living. Then it becomes action knowledge.

But how do we get the learners actively involved in their own learning? How do we give our learners an understanding of themselves – how they feel, how they think, and how they work – an understanding acceptable to themselves rather than to their surroundings? How do we best support our learners in their learning?

From a focus on teaching to a focus on learning – some general considerations

Figure 1 shows the learner in the centre, with his or her existing knowledge, potential, interests, etc., surrounded by new knowledge. In the foreign language (FL) classroom this knowledge is not just any knowledge. In the FL classroom the new knowledge includes areas that we as teachers are expected to teach our learners – e.g., grammar, vocabulary, and *Landeskunde* – in other words, the various areas mentioned in our curricular guidelines for language teaching and learning. From the discussion so far, however, we know that it is not simply a question of passing over this knowledge to our learners. As Barnes puts it (1976, p.83): "To get the knowledge from out there to in here is for the learner

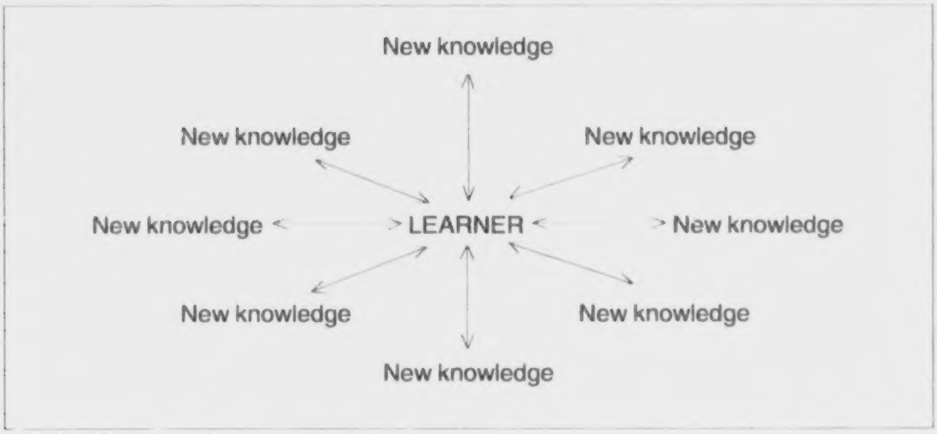


Figure 1

himself to do. The art of teaching is to know how to help the learner in this process."

The simplified model in Figure 2 illustrates the main elements of the teaching-learning process. As the model shows, whenever we do any planning we base it, consciously or unconsciously, on our previous knowledge and experience. We then carry out our plans, evaluate what happens, and make use of this experience in future planning. To a large extent, many so-called traditional FL classrooms are teacher-directed. When talking about the development of learner autonomy, it is a question of how learners can be made willing and able to direct their own learning – a move from teacher-directed teaching to learner-directed learning. It is the aim of this paper to suggest how best to create a learning-centred environment.

I define a learning-centred environment as one in which the teacher's knowledge about language learning – what to learn and how to learn – is combined with the learners' knowledge about themselves, their background, their likes and dislikes, their needs, and their preferred learning styles. To me a learning-centred environment is an environment in which the learners are:

- given the possibility of being consciously involved in their own learning;
- expected to be actively engaged in their own learning and thus made aware of the different elements involved in the learning process – an awareness to be made use of in other contexts.

Seen in this perspective, a learning-centred environment will be teacher-

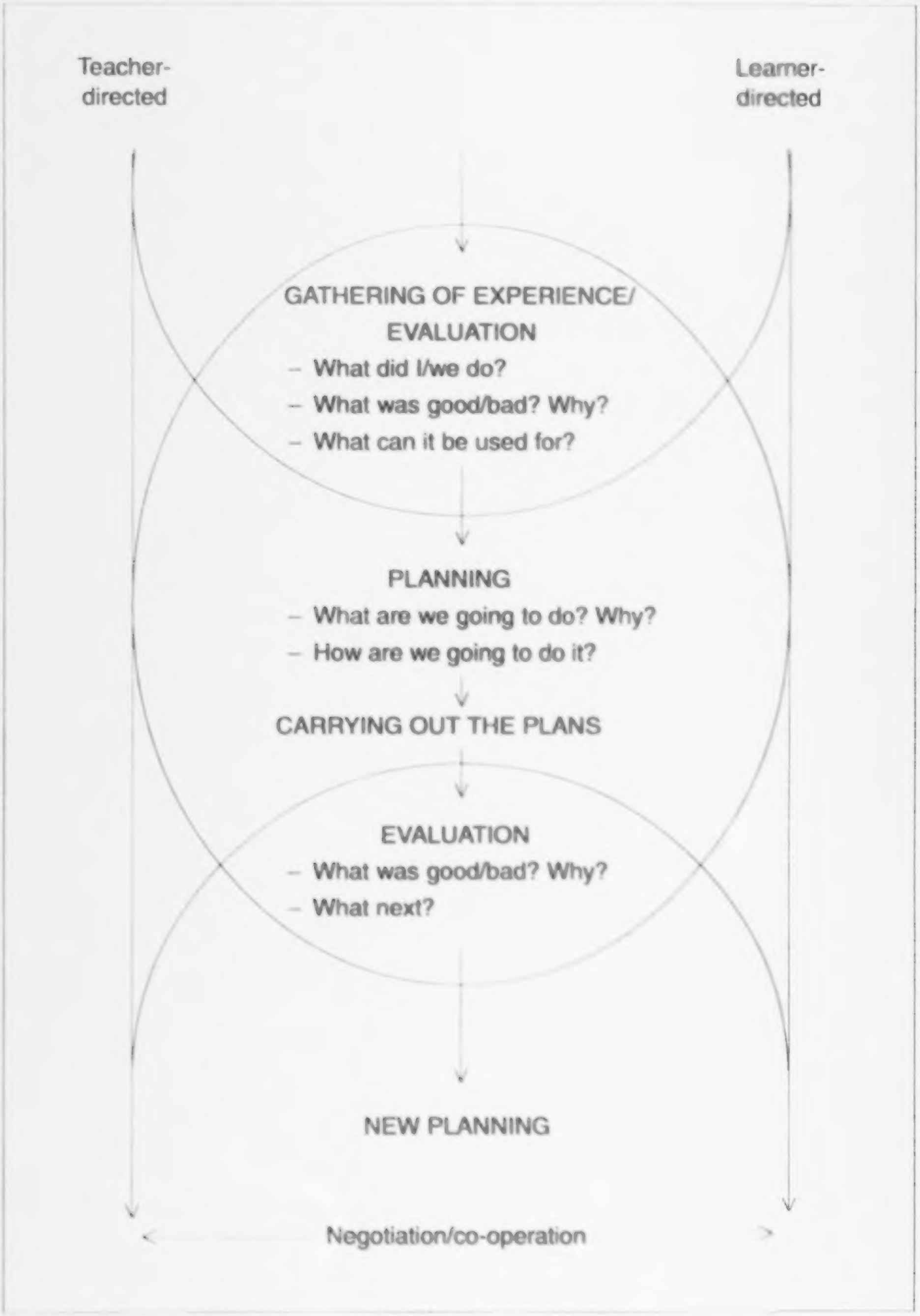

Teacher-directed
Learner-directed
GATHERING OF EXPERIENCE/ EVALUATION
– What did I/we do?
– What was good/bad? Why?
– What can it be used for?
PLANNING
– What are we going to do? Why?
– How are we going to do it?
CARRYING OUT THE PLANS
EVALUATION
– What was good/bad? Why?
– What next?
NEW PLANNING
Negotiation/co-operation

Figure 2
Simplified model of a learning–centred process

directed as well as learner-directed. It is an environment in which the teacher as well as the learners are responsible for the outcome of the teaching-learning process.

Some prerequisites for establishing such an environment seem to be:

- a willingness on the part of the teacher to let go, and on the part of the learners to take hold;
- an awareness of what to do and why and how it should be done (this applies to teachers as well as learners);
- an experience-based insight into the learning process for teachers and learners alike;
- an atmosphere of security, acceptance and respect.

From a focus on teaching to a focus on learning – some useful tools

But how is it to be done? A good starting point is to replace the question "How do I best teach my learners this or that?" with the question "How do I create the best learning environment for my learners?" This is also the question to which I have tried to find answers over the years. In what follows I describe some of the tools that I myself currently find most useful when moving from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. These relate to:

- the organization of the classroom;
- the structure of a lesson;
- the activities taking place;
- the use of diaries and posters.

The organization of the classroom

If we look at the classroom represented in Figure 3, we can see that the tables are arranged to set learners in groups of four to six, which means that each learner is facing three to five peers and all of them are facing the teacher. This setting has a number of advantages:

- It makes quick discussions and exchange of views within a group possible.
- It invites learner activity and peer tutoring.
- It supports individual learner involvement as it is less threatening to talk in a small group than in an open forum.
- It makes possible a transfer of focus from the teacher (traditionally "the entertainer") to the participants, and thus facilitates learner-learner interaction.

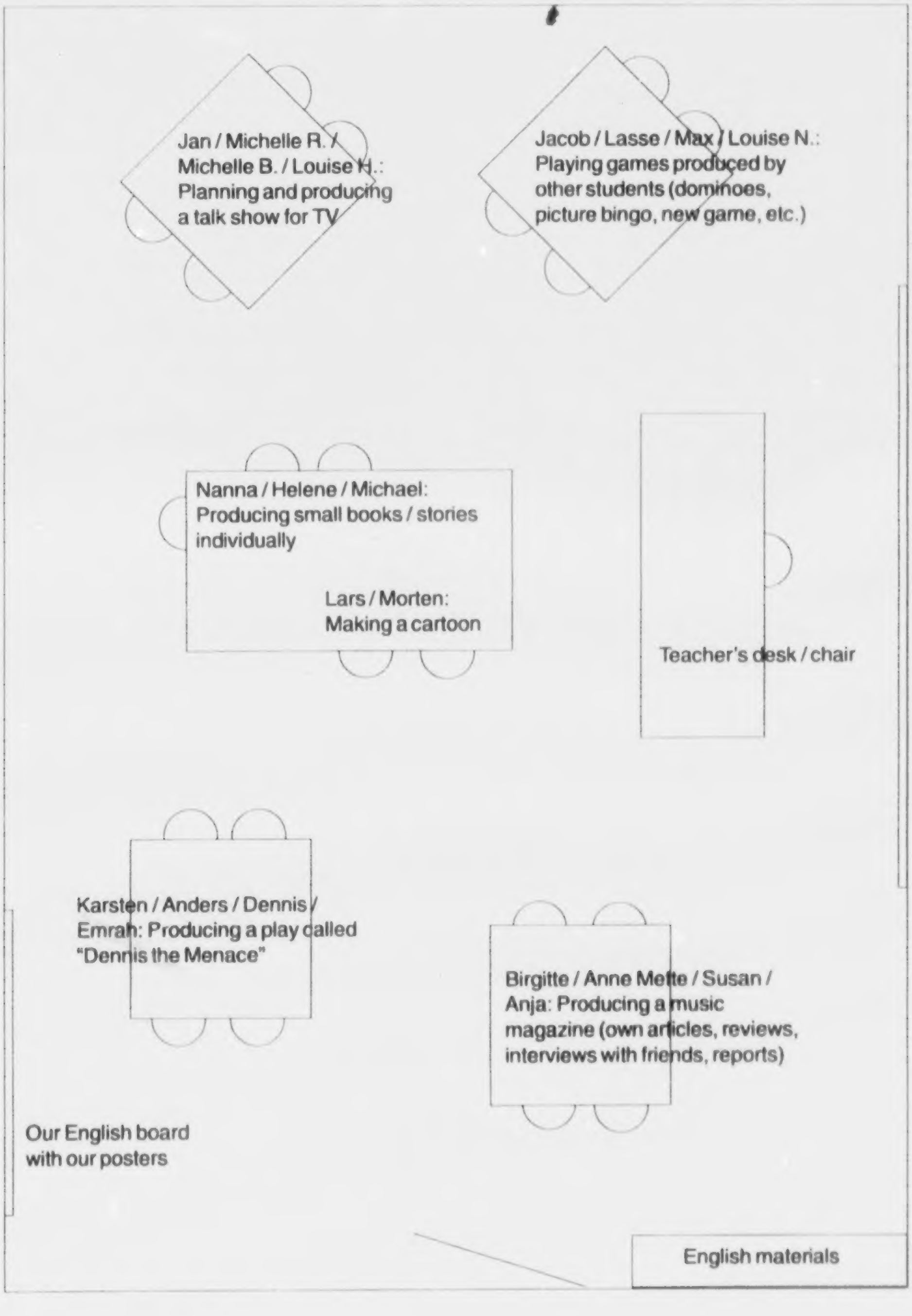

Jan / Michelle R. / Michelle B. / Louise H.: Planning and producing a talk show for TV
Jacob / Lasse / Max / Louise N.: Playing games produced by other students (dominoes, picture bingo, new game, etc.)
Nanna / Helene / Michael: Producing small books / stories individually
Lars / Morten: Making a cartoon
Teacher's desk / chair
Karsten / Anders / Dennis / Emrah: Producing a play called "Dennis the Menace"
Birgitte / Anne Mette / Susan / Anja: Producing a music magazine (own articles, reviews, interviews with friends, reports)
Our English board with our posters
English materials

Figure 3
Organization of a classroom

The structure of a lesson

Figure 4 shows a recently developed lesson plan that seems to facilitate the establishment of a learning-centred environment. It supports the teacher in letting go and the learners in taking hold in a number of ways:

- it clearly indicates the teacher's responsibilities;
- it clearly indicates the learners' responsibilities and the activities they are expected to undertake;
- it leaves space for a joint session where learners can share their experiences and the knowledge they have gained.

This lesson plan makes clear when the teacher is in charge and when he or she is a participant. It gives the classroom procedures a certain stability, and provides participants with a feeling of security.

0 Opening of lesson

1 Teacher-initiated and directed activities promoting awareness-raising as regards
  - Learning, the learning environment, and the roles and responsibilities expected from its participants
  - Useful language learning activities in terms of
    interpreting
    expressing
  - Learners' and teacher's evaluation of teacher-initiated and directed activities

2 Learner-initiated and directed activities:
  - Sharing homework
  - "2 minutes' talk"
  - "Free" learner-chosen activities in groups, pairs or individually within the given conditions
  - Planning homework – and perhaps next step
  - Learners' evaluation of work carried out individually, in pairs, or in groups

3 "Together" – a plenary session for the whole class including the teacher:
  - Presentation and evaluation of results or products from group work, pair work or individual work
  - Joint events such as songs, lyrics, story-telling, quizzes, etc.
  - Joint overall evaluation of the lesson

Figure 4
Structure of a lesson

The contents of a lesson

Teacher-initiated and teacher-directed activities

I have already claimed that the main role of the teacher is to provide a learning environment where learners are given the opportunity to be consciously involved in their own learning. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the teacher considers carefully what kind of activities she introduces for her learners to be engaged in.

A further claim I will make is that the main role of teacher-initiated and teacher-directed activities is awareness-raising. From Figure 4 it can be seen that I divide the activities into two main categories. The first category is concerned with the roles of as well as the interaction between the participants in the learning environment. Possible activities here are the kind where learners are asked to consider the following questions:

- Why do I learn English?
- How do I learn English?
- When and how do I learn best?
- What do I like? What do I not like? How do I show the rest of the class, including the teacher?
- What makes a good teacher? What makes a good learner?
- What is good group work? What makes a good partner?

The second category of activity is concerned specifically with language learning, interpreting the foreign language and being able to express oneself in the foreign language. Apart from focusing on these communicative abilities, the main criteria for the teacher's choice of activities in this category are:

- Do they give scope for satisfying the individual learner's needs, interests, and potential?
- Do they activate and extend the learners' existing knowledge?
- Do they allow different learner input and produce different learner outcomes?
- Do they give scope for a sense of progression?
- Can and will possible products be used by other learners?
- Do they give scope for learner-learner interaction, co-operation and peer-tutoring?
- Is it possible to make use of the same activity at different levels, e.g., at beginners' as well as intermediate level?

An example of an activity that satisfies these demands is what I call "picture plus text" when I introduce it to young learners. The teacher brings along a large photograph or drawing of some person or persons. The picture is placed on the blackboard for everybody to see. Together the class builds up a story or a dialogue to fit the picture. No words or expressions are given beforehand, but are supplied by the teacher or by other learners as necessary during the course of constructing the story or dialogue on posters on the blackboard. When the story/dialogue is finished, the learners are asked to look for photographs in the old magazines available on our materials shelf and to make up their own individual stories/dialogues in their diaries. They can get help from the language in our joint story or from language used in previous activities. They can also make use of dictionaries. They can get help from each other, and as a last resort they can ask the teacher. The name of the activity, "picture plus text", is then written on a poster together with our list of ideas for what to do. From now on the learners can choose to do the activity themselves. The original activity will then give scope for new and different learner-initiated activities. At beginners' level, for example, it might lead to the production of "picture plus text" bingo games or small books. In both cases other learners can then make use of the products. At intermediate level, the "picture plus text" activity will evolve into the production of magazines or newspapers, or reports on specific topics.

Once activities introduced by the teacher have been tried out by the whole class, they are evaluated, first individually and then in a plenary session, in terms of their usefulness for the learner. The results of the evaluations are recorded on posters.

I have one final important comment to make about teacher-initiated and teacher-directed activities. They enable the teacher to make explicit to the learners possible external demands and expectations at successive stages in the learning process. These might be, for example, demands laid down by curricular guidelines, or alternatively demands and expectations imposed by the teacher.

Learner-initiated and learner-directed activities

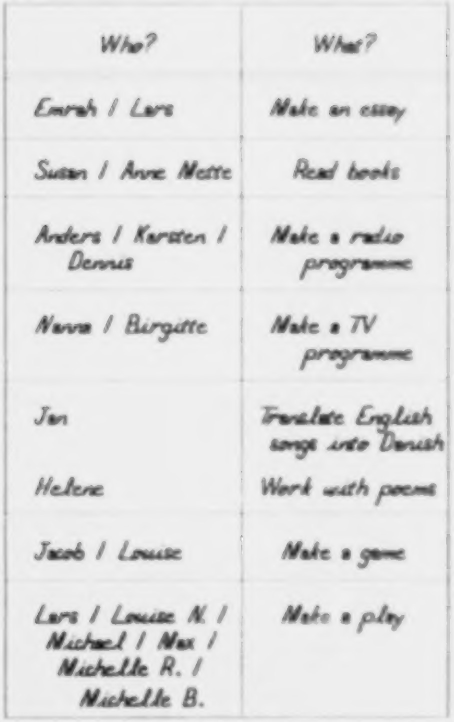
In this phase of a lesson the role of the teacher changes completely. She moves from being in charge to being a participant in the ongoing process. This implies being a listener, a discussant, a facilitator, a mapper-out of progress, and sometimes an expert. Once conditions are set so that learners are free to make their own decisions within certain areas, the teacher must refrain from being a controller during this phase.

The first activity to be mentioned in this category is "sharing homework", an activity in which learners working in pairs or in groups present to each other what they have done at home. They may read aloud a story or a small book produced at home, or present new words they have found while reading, or share an individual contribution to a group project. Ideas for what to do when sharing homework develop all the time and are recorded on a poster. Unless a pupil is absent and a partner for sharing homework is needed, the teacher does not take part in this activity.

The same holds true for the activity "two minutes' talk". This opportunity for learners to exchange small talk is very popular and often lasts longer than two minutes. The learners themselves decide what to talk about. It may be a good film one of them has seen, or a good book someone has read; it can be about what to do next weekend or what happened at the party last weekend. At intermediate level, the activities "sharing homework" and "two minutes' talk" are very often combined when a group is reading the same book or text. This may happen, for example, when pupils are preparing for an exam. Discussion points prepared by the learners themselves for the text in question will then replace "two-minutes' talk".

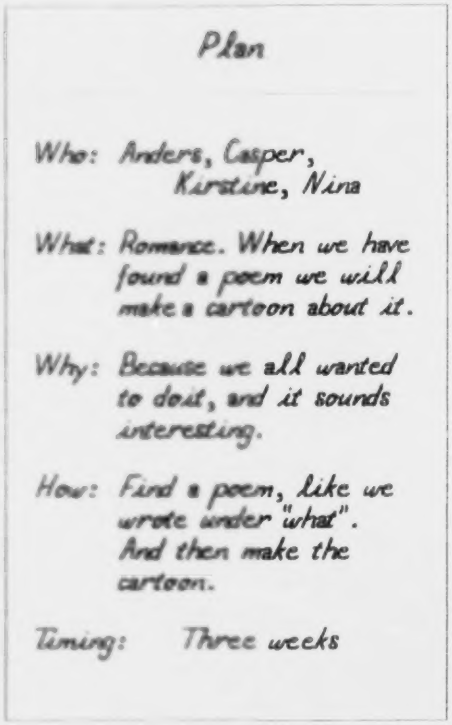
"Free activities" undertaken in groups, pairs or individually are not completely free, but are activities chosen from the list of "Ideas for what to do". In many cases learners will discuss with the teacher which activity to choose and how to carry it out. At intermediate level the learners themselves will be responsible for taking into account the requirements laid down in the curricular guidelines when deciding on an activity. Whether the activity they choose is done individually, in pairs or in groups, a poster is made summarizing "Who", "What", "Why", and "How". The posters are displayed on the wall for the rest of the class to see, together with a poster giving an overview of who is doing what (Figures 5 and 6).

At the end of the learner-directed activities the learners plan what to do for homework, either individually or in groups. Many groups will distribute tasks to be done at home in connection with their chosen activity, such as finding materials or writing an article for the newspaper or thinking of new episodes for a play. From time to time there will be a "must" from the teacher. In my case a "must" is to read something as soon as the learners are capable of reading. However, the learners decide themselves what to read and how much to read. Experience



Who?	What?
Emrah / Lars	Make an essay
Susan / Anne Mette	Read books
Anders / Karsten / Dennis	Make a radio programme
Nanna / Birgitte	Make a TV programme
Jan	Translate English songs into Danish
Helene	Work with poems
Jacob / Louise	Make a game
Lars / Louise N. / Michael / Max / Michelle R. / Michelle B.	Make a play

Figure 5
Poster with Who? / What?



Plan

Who: Anders, Casper, Kirstine, Nina

What: Romance. When we have found a poem we will make a cartoon about it.

Why: Because we all wanted to do it, and it sounds interesting.

How: Find a poem, like we wrote under "what". And then make the cartoon.

Timing: Three weeks

Figure 6
Poster with contract

shows that in many cases students will read far more than any teacher would think of demanding, no doubt because they have chosen books or texts that are interesting and at a level suitable for them.

Reflection/evaluation is no less essential at the end of the activities initiated and directed by the learners than at the end of those initiated and directed by the teacher. The most important issue is the learners' attempt at self-evaluation. With weaker learners, the evaluation of a lesson or an activity may consist simply in drawing a line indicating their personal evaluation on a scale from 1 to 10. In the same group a learner with greater language proficiency might write an extensive letter to me. What is crucial is that the evaluation process obliges all the learners to reflect systematically on what happened during the activities undertaken. These self-evaluations and reflections are also important because they provide a concrete and personally meaningful basis for subsequent shared evaluation with other learners and/or the teacher.

"Together" – a place for shared activities

This session is very important, primarily because it is where things are shared, where the results of individual work, pair work or group work are presented, discussed and evaluated. The importance lies not so much in the products, since they may be of interest only to a few, but rather in the process and the knowledge gained as a result of the work undertaken, including knowledge about learning, which allows the learners to make informed judgements about what to do next. The questions asked and answered during the presentation of a piece of work are:

- What did we do?
- How did we do it?
- Problems?
- Successes?
- With what result?
- Next step?

"Together" is also the place where it is possible to adjust the general course of learning or the learning environment by looking back and considering possible changes. This kind of evaluation does not, of course, replace the internal ongoing evaluation among individual learners or groups of learners during learning activities.

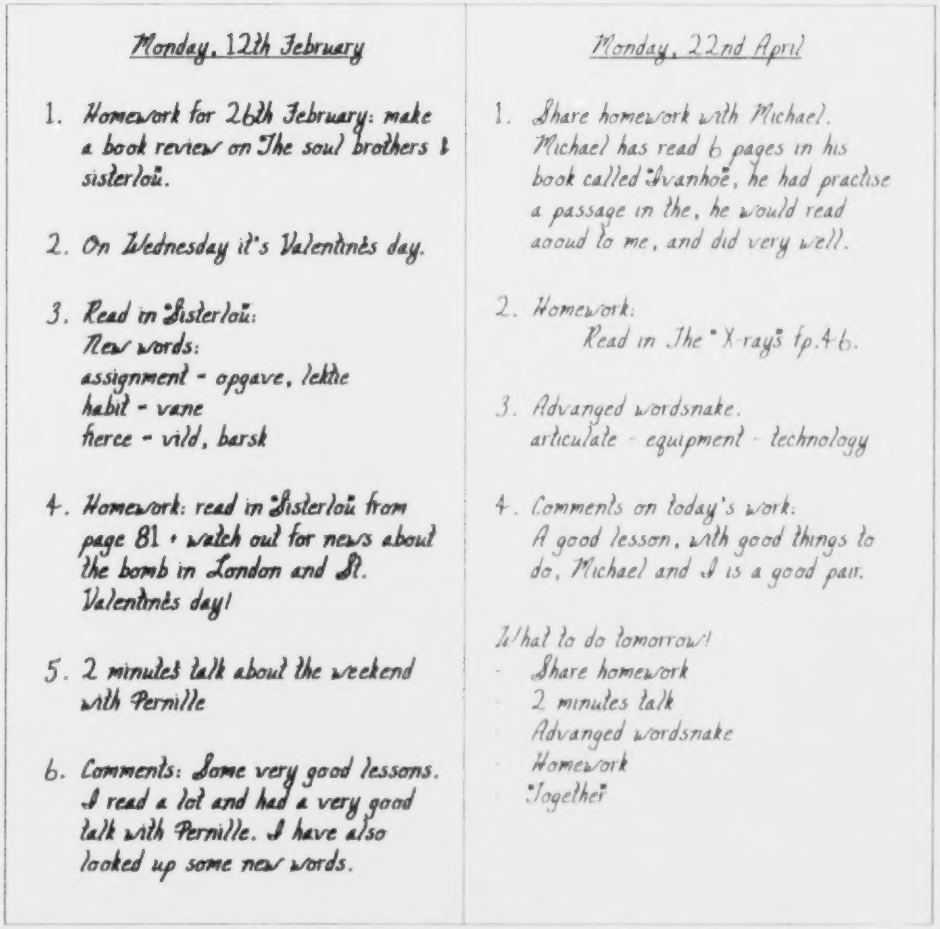
Inevitably, it is not possible in a lesson of 45–50 minutes to include all the items mentioned in the above plan for a teaching/learning period. It is up to the individual teacher to adjust the plan according to the needs of his or her situation. The time spent on each of the three phases as well as the choice of activities will depend on:

- the requirements of the curricular guidelines;
- structures and activities used previously (often based on a course book);
- learners' and parents' expectations of the teacher.

The use of posters and diaries

In moving from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, teachers often expect – and experience – chaos. One way of avoiding this is to use the kind of explicit lesson plan I have described; another way is to use posters and diaries.

Let us consider posters first. When describing the structure of a lesson, I mentioned the use of posters many times. To me posters are a way



Monday, 12th February

1. Homework for 26th February: make a book review on "The soul brothers & sisterlou".

2. On Wednesday it's Valentines day.

3. Read in "Sisterlou":
New words:
assignment - opgave, lektie
habit - vane
fierce - vild, barsk

4. Homework: read in "Sisterlou" from page 81 + watch out for news about the bomb in London and St. Valentines day!

5. 2 minutes talk about the weekend with Pernille

6. Comments: Some very good lessons. I read a lot and had a very good talk with Pernille. I have also looked up some new words.

Monday, 22nd April

1. Share homework with Michael. Michael has read 6 pages in his book called "Ivanhoe", he had practise a passage in the, he would read aooud to me, and did very well.

2. Homework:
Read in The "X-rays" fp.4-6.

3. Advanged wordsnake.
articulate - equipment - technology

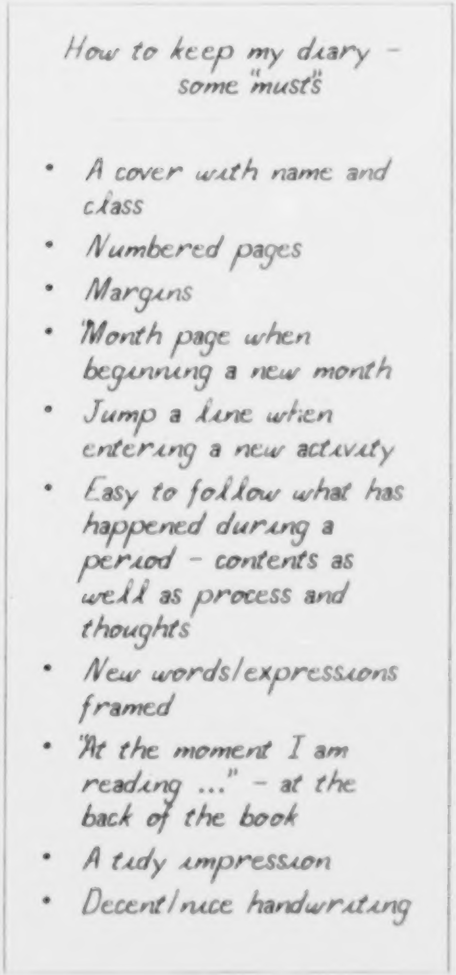
4. Comments on today's work:
A good lesson, with good things to do, Michael and I is a good pair.

What to do tomorrow!
- Share homework
- 2 minutes talk
- Advanged wordsnake
- Homework
- "Together"

Figure 7
Two extracts from a learner's diary

of keeping track of the ongoing learning process. They act as a kind of process curriculum and help the teacher as well as the learners to keep chaos at bay. At the same time the use of posters is a sign of respect for what the learners themselves say in the process of awareness-raising. Their ideas, views, and evaluations are not wiped out at the end of the lesson, but are kept on the wall for future use. In this way, incidentally, posters also provide the learners with a lot of visible, authentic language.

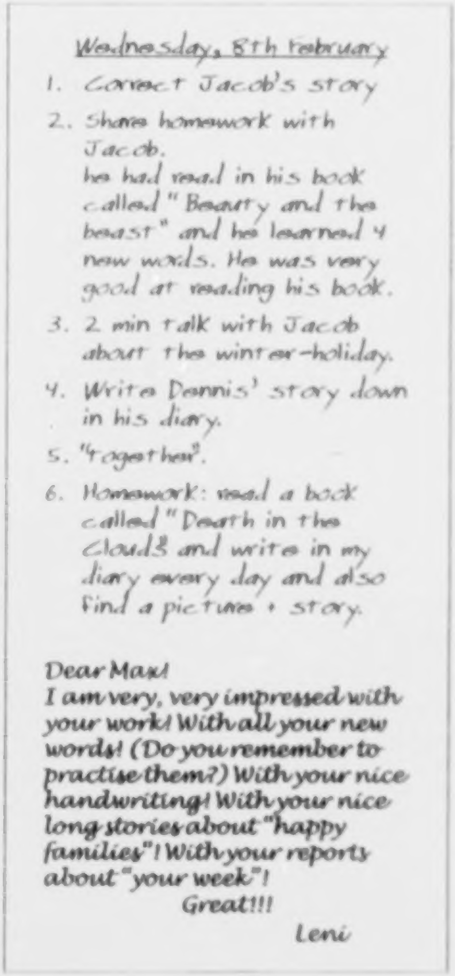
A second and equally important tool is the diary, which I first started using in my classes in the early 1980s, after a Dutch colleague showed



How to keep my diary –
some "musts"

- A cover with name and class
- Numbered pages
- Margins
- 'Month page when beginning a new month
- Jump a line when entering a new activity
- Easy to follow what has happened during a period – contents as well as process and thoughts
- New words/expressions framed
- "At the moment I am reading ..." – at the back of the book
- A tidy impression
- Decent/nice handwriting

Figure 8
Some "musts" for keeping your diary



Wednesday, 8th February

1. Correct Jacob's story
2. Share homework with Jacob.
   he had read in his book called "Beauty and the beast" and he learned 4 new words. He was very good at reading his book.
3. 2 min talk with Jacob about the winter-holiday.
4. Write Dennis' story down in his diary.
5. "together".
6. Homework: read a book called "Death in the Clouds" and write in my diary every day and also find a picture + story.

Dear Max!
I am very, very impressed with your work! With all your new words! (Do you remember to practise them?) With your nice handwriting! With your nice long stories about "happy families"! With your reports about "your week"!
Great!!!
Leni

Figure 9
Extract from a learner's diary with teacher's comments

some student logbooks at a conference. What fascinated me was the possibility of keeping a personal record of what one was doing in one book. Around the same time my pupils were complaining about the amount of loose papers, photocopies and questionnaires given to them, so I took over the idea of the logbook and adapted it to suit my own needs and demands as well as the needs and demands of my pupils at that time (Figure 7).

To me the diary is a tool for keeping track of the individual learner's work – for the learner, for me and for the learner's parents (if they are interested). It makes direct contact between all three parties possible. From day to day it is mostly used for contact between the learner and the teacher, but it comes in very useful at parents' meetings. For the learners themselves the diary is useful for group work or pair work, when setting up contracts and distributing tasks in connection with a project, and it is useful for remembering what homework has been decided on. It also provides an overview of daily or weekly reflections and evaluations. But most important, the diary is a tool for awareness-raising and genuine, authentic language use.

I introduced a number of "musts" (Figure 8) mainly in order to facilitate communication between the learners and myself. I was tired of spending too much time finding my way around their diaries and struggling to read their handwriting. Commenting on these problems individually by writing notes in each learner's diary took up time as well as valuable space in the diary, and seemed to have little effect. Consequently, I introduced this list of "musts" relevant to my needs in relation to a particular group of learners. From time to time I ask the learners to check and discuss the "musts" in pairs. These discussions often result in personal contracts as regards things to be improved in the diary, such as: "Try to make it more personal", "A few colours and pictures might improve the look of my diary", "Remember to frame new words and expressions", and "Remember to number pages". From time to time the demands are discussed openly in class in the "together" session – a discussion that might result in a reduction or an extension of demands according to the needs of teacher and learners.

At one point I feared that there was a danger these "musts" would make the diaries impersonal, but this did not happen. On the contrary, many learners have developed a very personal diary. This might, of course, be due to my growing awareness as regards what I want (teacher direction). It might also be due to the fact that not having to comment on the form of the diary has given me the time and opportunity to develop more personal contact with individual learners via the diaries. For example, I have started formulating my comments and suggestions to the learner in a letter-format (see Figure 9).

In the move from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning the teacher's diary is no less important than learners' diaries. As teacher I have my own diary where I keep track of the lessons as well as the learning process of the students (Figure 10). My diary is always next to me when I am working with learners individually or in groups. I use it there and

14/9/92	
1. Day / Date	
2. New groups? *- Who is working with whom?* *- Who is doing what?* *- Group leaders?*	*2. A. Helene/Anders would like to work together. Were placed next to Emrah/Max. - Make a play!* *B. Lasse/Jacob move over to Jan/Michael! Jacob seems to feel better there.* *C. Anja/Louise/Louise form a new group - word cards!*
3. Share homework in new groups.	
4. Work in groups.	*4. Till 9.20!*
5. Homework for ...	*5. No problems today!*
6. "Together":	
- Evaluation (+/-)	*It was good with a new group* *- We did not work very hard!* *- We worked hard. It was fun!*
- New games/ideas?	*see poster!*
- Books to be read aloud?	*Nanna's cartoon "Shut up"* *Karsten's book about football.* *Anne Mette: I did not understand it!*
- Song	*There wasn't time*

Figure 10
Extract from a teacher's diary

then to make notes of problems, successes or needs that emerge in my discussions with the learner(s). In this way the learners can see that using a diary is a natural part of the learning process for me as well as for them.

From focus on teaching to focus on learning – problems as well as successes to be foreseen

Teachers who want to change from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning often foresee and sometimes encounter the following problems:

- Parents' as well as learners' expectations of the teacher: "It is the teacher's job to teach."
- Insecurity on the part of the learners.
- Insecurity on the part of the teacher: "Will they learn enough?", "What about the weak learners?", "What about the difficult learners?"
- Waste of time.
- Difficult to handle with large numbers of students.
- The weak learners will be the losers.
- Difficult for the teacher to let go.
- Difficult for the learners to take hold.
- The learners' ability to assume responsibility.
- Lack of materials.
- Difficult to administer.
- Chaos.
- Lack of time.
- Curricular demands and tests.
- Parents' attitudes to "learning" and "teaching" – the way they were taught.
- Insecurity on the part of the parents.

In addition to this list of problems, the introduction of diaries or logbooks turns out to be a catastrophe for many teachers. In general, learners do not think that it is an excellent idea to keep a diary – at least not from the very beginning. It takes time; it often means a lot of writing, which they do not like; and they can seldom really see the purpose. There are usually two main reasons for this. Either the teachers themselves have not considered carefully why and how they want to make use of the diary in their classes, or else, if they have done this, they have not shared their thoughts with the learners or asked them for ideas as regards content and form.

Of course, the problems listed above are to a large extent problems that teachers experience and have difficulty coping with in any FL classroom; the thought of trying out something new and unknown just brings them to the surface. The big difference is that in a learning-centred environment, the teacher is not the only one responsible for solving problems. She can bring problems into the classroom and open them to discussion. An example is provided by the decision to introduce helpers in my class many years ago. I was finding it difficult to cope with all the requests for help from pupils – I felt that I was everywhere and nowhere. I discussed my problem with the class and together we came up with the idea of having a list of helpers, learners willing to help their peers when I was busy elsewhere in the class. By handling it in this way I made the problem one for the class to solve in co-operation with the teacher: because I shared the problem with them my learners felt responsible for helping me to solve it. Any problem that arises in the classroom can and should be dealt with in this way.

When all this is said and done, though, there is no doubt that when teachers decide to focus on learning rather than teaching, the successes far outweigh the problems. These successes include:

- motivation and engagement on the part of the learners;
- socially responsible learners;
- the teacher's insight into the individual learner's needs and ways of learning;
- the learners' linguistic competence;
- the satisfaction deriving from the fact that the teacher has become a co-learner.

As a Spanish teacher said in 1989: "The most positive thing about the way I am working now is that I have become a human being in my classes."

As for the learners, there is no doubt that they come to appreciate a learning-centred environment, as is clear from the following statements copied directly from learners' evaluations:

> "I really like the English lessons, because its very free and you are allowed to take the 'everyday English' from TV and magazines and mix it with the teaching. I think that we've got a lot of 'freedom' if you can express it like that. We got to choose our own subjekts and books. How to work with it, who to work with and so on. Exept from the times where you've said we had to try a new partner, but thats o.k., 'cause you can learn from that too. We were allowed to be as good as we would. Good with constantly English speaking. Compulsery homework of our own choice. Good with work in groups."

> "Most important is probably the way we have worked. That we were expected to and given the chance to decide ourselves what to do. That we worked independently ... And we have learned much more because we have worked with different things. In this way we could help each other because some of us had learned something and others had learned something else. It doesn't mean that we haven't had a teacher to help us.

> Because we have, and she has helped us. But the day she didn't have the time, we could manage on our own."
>
> "I already make use of the fixed procedures from our diaries when trying to get something done at home. Then I make a list of what to do or remember the following day. That makes things much easier. I have also via English learned to start a conversation with a stranger and ask good questions. And I think that our 'together' session has helped me to become better at listening to other people and to be interested in them. I feel that I have learned to believe in myself and to be independent."

But learners also agree that being responsible is hard work!

Concluding remarks

The learners' statements reproduced above are probably the best argument for moving from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. But why does it work? Let me briefly summarize the main principles of a learning-centred environment. First of all, it provides a setting

- where expectations and demands are explicitly stated;
- where there is a well-defined freedom of choice, e.g., of activities, partners, homework;
- where learners are required to make choices for which they are then responsible;
- where individual differences are catered for.

It also provides a setting

- where the teacher is a co-learner;
- where the learners are co-teachers;
- where awareness-raising is the means as well as the aim.

Last, but by no means least, a learning-centred environment develops in its participants – learners and teachers alike – a self-esteem which supports them not only in their learning but when coping with other exigencies of life.

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Focus on learning rather than teaching – with what results?

Lienhard Legenhausen

Introductory remarks

As language teachers it might be pertinent to remind ourselves every now and then that education is an undertaking involving the whole person, and educational objectives go beyond the more narrowly defined aims of the various school subjects. In the long run these cross-disciplinary and superordinate objectives – relating to the learners' development of their personality and their ability to cope with all possible contingencies of life – are more important than the ability to phrase a sentence in the foreign language correctly or even the ability to interact meaningfully with members of the target language community.

However, it also goes without saying that it is essential for students to achieve a satisfactory level of communicative proficiency in the foreign language. After all, the success and/or failure of a certain type of syllabus will be judged in terms of the end-products or the students' skill mastery. Thus a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes of a foreign language classroom will have to reflect the complex web of learning and teaching objectives and give a balanced account of linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes.

The following schematic summary – though not at all meant to be exhaustive – presents an overview of some of the more important dimensions to be considered when assessing the implementation of a foreign language curriculum:

Cognitive domain

linguistic:	knowledge of forms functional competence metalinguistic and metacommunicative awareness
non-linguistic:	awareness of learning process strategic knowledge (including learning to learn) pragmatic knowledge (including intercultural awareness)

Affective domain
personality-related: self-esteem / tolerance of ambiguity, etc.
learning-related: attitude to learning and target language culture
motivation to continue learning (cf. lifelong learning)

Social domain
setting-related: climate of learning environment (cf. atmosphere of caring and sharing)
group-related: responsibility and solidarity
task-related: social management skills

For reasons of space and available data, this paper cannot address all of these domains and will therefore restrict itself to outcomes in the cognitive domain. It will focus in particular on the linguistic outcomes of a classroom approach in which a serious attempt has been made to implement principles of autonomous language learning. The data derive mainly from the LAALE project, in which the linguistic development of a class of Danish learners was systematically observed and recorded over a period of several years.

LAALE – the experimental set-up

LAALE stands for *Language Acquisition in an Autonomous Learning Environment*. Leni Dam and I started the project in 1992, and its aim was to follow the language development of one of her classes from the first days of beginning English (in the 5th grade) to the end of their comprehensive school career, which for most students (though not all) ended after completing the 9th grade.

Space does not permit a detailed description of the particular pedagogical approach practised by Leni Dam (readers are referred to her paper in this volume for a fuller account). In brief, she fosters a learning-centred environment where teacher and learners share responsibility for the outcome of the teaching-learning process. Learners are expected to be actively involved in their learning, to take initiatives and to engage in reflective and evaluative processes. What happens in the classroom is largely shaped by their own needs and interests, and revolves around collaborative learning activities of one kind or another, conducted through the medium of the target language (English). Ideas, reflections, evaluations and outcomes are shared and recorded on classroom posters for all to see. The English language products of learning (student-produced booklets, plays and other materials) are made available as resources for everyone to use. In addition, students keep individual learner diaries to document and reflect on their personal learning experience.

At the beginning of the LAALE project, there were 10 girls and 11 boys altogether in the selected class, eight of whom received remedial teaching in mother tongue subjects like reading/writing and maths. In other words it was a mixed ability group. English was taught (and for some students still is "taught") in two double periods, each of the four lessons lasting 45 minutes. We collected the data over a period of four years, making a point of systematically varying the form of data elicitation and also of covering a wide range of language abilities (cf. Table 1).

Elicitation stage	Length of tuition/ learning	Form of elicitation	Language items/ abilities
I	7.5 weeks (30 lessons)	open questions/ spontaneous recall	productive vocabulary
II	15 weeks (60 lessons)	vocabulary test	receptive abilities (auditory/visual recognition); orthography
III	30 weeks	structure test (open and closed questions)	structures: PRO, NEG, Q, SF, EF, etc.; written production
IV	1 year, 5 months	peer-to-peer talk/ structured interview	oral proficiency
V	3 years	picture story/C-test	writing and reading abilities
VI	4 years	peer-to-peer talk/ C-test	oral proficiency/ writing and reading abilities

Table 1
Experimental design

In order to facilitate the interpretation of the various test results, we compared and contrasted the autonomous learners' language abilities/ proficiency levels with those of learners who were following a more traditional, textbook-based syllabus. There were several sets of additional data from these more traditional types of classes, one of which came from the same school (N =17). For various reasons, however, we could administer only a few of the tests to them (vocabulary tests and C-tests, production of stories). The C-tests and story productions at Stage V (after 3 years) were also carried out with 129 learners from German grammar and comprehensive school classes. In this paper, however, the focus when comparing learner data will be on a particular class of traditional learners who attended a German grammar school (*Gymnasium*). These learners did all the tests up to and including data collection Stage IV (= peer-to-peer talks/structured interviews).

When making comparisons with *Gymnasium* students, we have to bear in mind that the German school system is a selective three-tier system which streams students on the basis of abilities/aptitude at a fairly early stage. This means that only about 40 per cent of the students each year attend a *Gymnasium*. These are students who intend eventually to take A-level examinations. In short, lower-ability students do not go to this type of school in the first place.

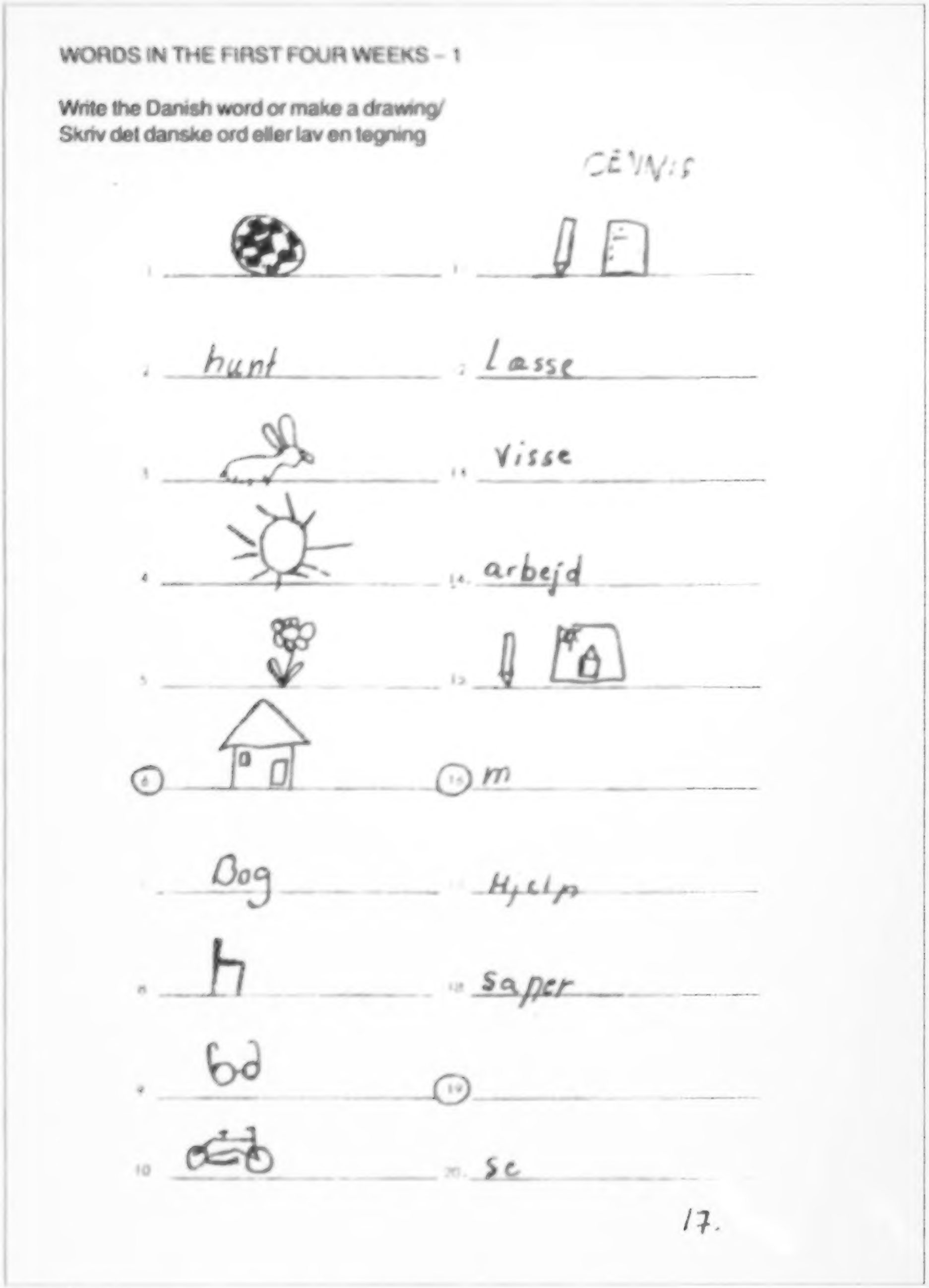
Devising measuring instruments that were unbiased and fair to all learner groups was far from easy. Some of the Danish learners, for example, had severe writing difficulties even in their Danish mother tongue. This meant that in some of the vocabulary sub-tests we were obliged to let them either give the translation equivalent in Danish or make a drawing. The copy of a test page from one of the weak students (Figure 1) illustrates the extent of the problem.

Linguistic outcomes

The following discussion aims at giving an overview of mainly statistical findings relating to selected aspects of vocabulary knowledge, grammar proficiency, discourse behaviour and reading/writing skills.

Vocabulary knowledge

Since the results of the vocabulary tests have already been published elsewhere (Dam and Legenhausen 1996), only some of the more significant results will be summarized here.



WORDS IN THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS – 1

Write the Danish word or make a drawing/
Skriv det danske ord eller lav en tegning

DENNIS

1\.
2. hunt
3\.
4\.
5\.
⑥
7. Bog
8\.
9. bd
10\.
11\.
12. Lasse
13. Visse
14. arbejd
15\.
⑯ m
17. Hjelp
18. Saper
⑲
20. Sc

17.

Figure 1
A weak student's answers to a vocabulary test after four weeks of learning English

In order to document the process of vocabulary acquisition by the autonomous learners in the first four weeks, all the words that were used in writing and were potentially accessible to the whole class were recorded and entered into a data bank. Thus we collected all the words from the classroom posters, the learner-produced booklets, word-games, picture lottos, etc., but words used in the more private diaries were not included. All in all about 400 words thus emerged which could, in principle at least, have formed the basic word-stock for the whole learner group. However, we should also mention that not all the learners worked or played with all of the peer-produced materials.

For the purposes of interpreting the figure, we needed some kind of yardstick or comparative reference point. Two such measures suggested themselves:

1. The most widely used coursebook in Germany, *Learning English – Green Line* (Beile et al. 1984), which implements the official language curriculum prescribed by the educational authorities in the various federal states in Germany, introduces 124 different words within the same period of time, i.e. within the first four weeks.
2. The grammar school curriculum for the state of North-Rhine Westfalia, where our German learner group is located, requires knowledge/mastery of 800 different words in the first year of English. This would mean that the autonomous Danish learners had already fulfilled half of the prescribed learning requirement within the first four weeks of English – provided that the words in open view in the classroom had actually been learned by the students. This was checked by us when we administered the vocabulary battery after 15 weeks (Stage II).

The overall result was that by and large most Danish learners had actually learned these 400 words. The average score on auditory/visual recognition items (implying meaning recall) ranged between 92% and 99% for three subtests, and dropped to 63% for difficult multisyllabic words which had been attested only once in the databank (subtest 4). Two other subtests yielded an average score of 73% – one of the tests aimed at spelling accuracy, and the other test asked for a translation/drawing of an L2 word.

Although the German learners took the same test, statistics are not really comparable since the textbook had introduced only a minor subset of the 400 words. If the success rate for "taught vocabulary" only is calculated, the German students scored higher on the last two subtests

(89% and 86%), but they did not do quite as well on the first three subtests, where scores ranged between 88% and 90%. The difficult and rare words of subtest 4 had not occurred in the coursebook.

The figures for the first vocabulary test ("spontaneous recall"), administered after seven and a half weeks of learning (30 lessons), are even more revealing from a comparative point of view. Here both learner groups were asked to write down as many words as they could think of. In the instructions they were given cues such as: "Think of colours, animals, people, things you can eat, things you can see in the classroom, things people do at work or in their free time." We were interested in their ability to call up words spontaneously. It is here that the Danish learners showed a remarkable and superior ability to access their foreign vocabulary. The average number of words recalled was 62 for the Danish mixed ability group and 47 for the German *Gymnasium* students. When we compared the top ten learners in the two groups, the difference was even greater, with an average of 85 words for autonomous and 59 words for more traditional learners. On the other hand, the margin decreased for the bottom ten learners (40 words vs. 36 words). This clearly shows that the German *Gymnasium* class was much more homogeneous. It should be noted that the difference between the two groups levels out as soon as only correctly spelled words are counted. (For a more detailed account of the vocabulary tests, see Dam and Legenhausen 1996.)

Grammatical proficiency

For many researchers and practitioners the methodological crux of any teaching-learning approach seems to be grammar. Ever since foreign languages have been taught and learned in institutional settings, experts of one kind or another have put forward forceful views on the blessings or the shortcomings of grammar teaching. Some of the earlier and very explicit statements on the role of grammar in foreign language teaching can be found in John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693/1989):

> And there are Ladies who without Knowing what *Tenses* and *Participles, Adverbs* and *Prepositions* are, speak as properly [...] as most Gentlemen who have been Bred up in the ordinary Methods of Grammar-Schools. (1989, p.225)

> [...] the right way of teaching that Language, [...] is by talking it into Children in constant Conversation, and not by Grammatical Rules. (ibid., p.216)

The issue as such has not at all been clarified or solved – as we all know. *There can be no doubt that learners* of all ages can and do pick up the grammar of the target language in fairly efficient ways. After all, there is plenty of evidence to suggest this from learners in naturalistic environments – i.e., total immersion contexts. The younger they are, the better they seem to do in the long run. But what about the school context, in which only three to five 45-minute lessons are taught per week?

We are convinced that our LAALE data are well-suited to providing additional arguments in the debate. The traditional learners are exposed to systematic grammar instruction. Rule-learning as well as code-focused exercises figure prominently in the overall approach. By contrast, the autonomous learners have to construct their grammatical knowledge themselves. They need to arrive at target language norms by some kind of processing operation which has been variously called "inductive generalization" (in earlier psychological models) or "creative construction" (in SLA theories).

One of the more complex grammatical structures that learners have to acquire in the first two years of English is the *to do*-periphrase in questions and negations. We therefore included *do*-support constructions in the structure tests after 30 weeks of English. However, the results were unrevealing since the autonomous learners had difficulties coping with formal test operations where language had to be manipulated. For example, the test-battery included completion items such as *I like pop songs, but I ...... Michael Jackson*, where students were asked to negate the second sentence. Exactly half of the Danish learners could not bring themselves to negate this sentence and reacted instead to the content of the item. They used expressions such as *but I love Michael Jackson, but I like most Michael Jackson*, etc.

More revealing was the way *do*-support structures were handled in the so-called peer-to-peer talks. We asked pairs of learners to talk about a topic of their own choice for about 4 to 5 minutes. Peer-to-peer talks thus constituted some kind of free communicative practice. We elicited the data after one and a half years of English as well as after four years. Table 2 gives an overview of question formations with *do*-support after the first round of peer-to-peer talks:

Learner group	Total no. of learners	Well-formed questions Total	Well-formed questions %	Ill-formed questions Total	Ill-formed questions %
TG	135	100	74.1	35	25.9
AG	142	99	69.7	43	30.3

Table 2
***To do*-questions**

With three out of four questions well-formed, the results of the traditional group (TG = 74.1%) seem to be slightly better than those of the autonomous learners (AG = 69.7%). However, six students in AG did not make any mistake at all (44 questions), while two of them had only one deviant structure (16 questions).

On the other hand, more than half of the questions asked by the traditional learners were formed either with the verb *like* or with *live* (83 – 61.5%). Questions such as *Do you like x?/Where do you live?/Do you live in a house or in a flat?* are intensively practised in their textbook (*Green Line* Vol. I, Units 5A and 5B.) They are also quite well-represented in the autonomous group, though not nearly as often (38 – 26.8 %).

If we focus only on question formations with the verbs *like / live*, the percentage of well-formed *to do*-questions goes up markedly in both learner groups. With the verbs *like* and *live*, nine out of ten *to do*-questions are well-formed in both learner groups. This means that questions of this type have become formulaic and are thus highly automatized at that learning stage (TG: 91.6 %; AG: 89.5 %).

But there is a surprise waiting for us. If we subtract stereotypical questions with *like* and *live* from the total number of occurrences of *to do*-questions, we are then left with figures which point to the creative ability of young learners in handling *do*-support (cf. Table 3). The percentage of well-formed *to do*-questions in the TG group drops from 74.1% to 46.2 % when automatized formulaic questions are not included. By contrast, autonomous learners perform almost equally well when they use the language creatively.

But what about *do*-support questions and negations in peer-to-peer talks after 4 years of English? In the data elicited from the autonomous learners, 96.6 % of all structures calling for *do*-support were by then well-formed. In other words, there was just the odd mistake in oral interactions, which even highly advanced non-native speakers tend to make every now and then.

Learner group	Question type	Overall frequencies	Well-formed		Ill-formed	
			Total	%	Total	%
TG	*to do-Q [-like/live]*	52	24	46.2	28	53.8
AG	*to do-Q [-like/live]*	103	65	63.1	38	36.9

Table 3
To do*-questions without *like, live

Discourse behaviour

Comparing traditional and autonomous learners

It is our view that the particular type of classroom culture that develops in traditional and autonomous settings has a strong impact on the overall learning attitudes of learners, and that these different attitudes lead to a different type of communicative behaviour. We would like to illustrate this aspect with data from the peer-to-peer talks referred to earlier. (For a more comprehensive analysis of discourse behaviour, see Legenhausen 1999.)

German grammar school students are systematically prepared for these talks. They are first encouraged to work through various preparatory exercises, before moving on to freer communicative practice. In the so-called transfer phase learners are then supposed to apply what they have learned to personally relevant situations. In other words, the task we set the learners (to talk about themselves, their environment, hobbies, wishes, plans, etc.) is systematically incorporated in the textbook approach, and the ability to carry out such a task is an explicitly stated teaching objective. Furthermore, the traditional learners were also given the opportunity to practise peer-to-peer talks in previous lessons.

The autonomous learners, by contrast, are neither especially trained to talk about themselves nor provided with the linguistic means in any systematic way. However, they are familiar with peer-to-peer talks in the form of an activity that they call "two minutes' talk".

When comparing the overall range of (macro-)topics learners chose to talk about, very few differences could be detected between the two groups. However, there was a basic difference in *how* the various subtopics were introduced and dealt with. And it is here that contrasting communicative attitudes and a completely different approach to the task can be observed.

In order to assess the quality of a social interaction and of a communicative exchange, the set of descriptive categories suggested by discourse analysts might serve as potential evaluative criteria. The following list of questions is a random selection:

- How are topics introduced, elaborated, changed and ended?
- What range of interactional moves can be observed?
- To what extent are the conversational maxims as defined by Grice adhered to?
- To what extent are politeness principles upheld? How responsive is the hearer to what his/her partner has just said? How effectively are speakers supported during their turns?

Etc., etc. Space does not permit us to go through such a list of discourse features systematically. We can only give a few illustrations regarding the quality of exchange structures. The excerpts in (1) and (2) may be considered fairly typical of the two learner groups:

(1) *Traditional learners*
A: [...] Ehm, what are your hobbies?
S: My hobby is ehm football, tennis and track and field.
A: My hobbies are ehm te / ah tennis, (..) ha / ah handball, (..) and (..) ehm (..) mhm and ja football (..) ehm, what ehm / have you got many friends?
S: Yes, I have.
A: Ehm.
S: Their names are ah you, eh BD, MS and (..) CM.
A: Yeah, that's my friend, too. Eh.
S: How old are you?
A: I'm twelve years old. And you?
S: Eleven.
A: Ehm. Do you live in a house or in a flat?
S: I live in a house in Olfen.
A: I live in a flat in Olfen, too. (..) Ehm, eh.
S: What's your telephone number?

A: My telephone number is three five seven five, and what's your tele / telephone number?
S: My telephone number is ehm three two two two. (..)
A: Ah, ah, do you like school?
S: Yes, sometimes.
A: Yeah, I'm too. Sometimes school is good and sometimes is bad. Ehm.
S: And what's your favourite teacher?

(2) *Autonomous learners*
C: What shall we talk about?
M: I don't know. What do you think?
C: Ah, we could talk about yesterday.
M: Ok.
C: [What did you?]
M: [What did you?]
(laughing)
M: What did you do?
C: Well, I went home from school, and I write (..) some some music for my music group.
M: Yeah.
C: We shall play here Friday, after school, we have (..) borrowed a a room with drums and guitars, and so (..) we're going to (..) record a tape, with our songs.
M: How many are you in your group?
C: Ah, let me see. There's me and Lars, and Anders and Emrah, and eh, Rasmus, so we are five. And we have made five songs so far. So –
M: One to each. (Pause)
C: Yes, I thi- I think it's fun. I play the drums and I (..) so (..) in the band they say I'm good at it. I hope they're right.
C: Yeah.

The discourse structure in (1) can be characterized in terms of a repetitive sequence of
A: Question
B: Answer – Mirror Image Question
A: Answer
If the mirror image question is missing, learner A will volunteer the in-

formation anyway – as if he presupposes B's interest in his corresponding answer. By contrast, a closer analysis of the exchange in (2) reveals a much richer interactional structure. In the peer-to-peer talks between traditional learners, one out of two interactional moves consists of questions, whereas in the autonomous group requests for information occur less often. Here it is only one out of three moves.

Even very weak Danish learners do not avoid high-risk interactions, and try to expand and elaborate topics of interest even if the linguistic means of expression available to them are highly limited. Example (3) is a case in point:

(3)
D: ... What did / what should you do today?
L: Today I ehm I shall have my birthday.
D: Have you birthday today?
L: Yes.
D: Happy birthday.
L: Thank you. So I should home and, and and make made a cake to my –
D: Birthday cake?
L: Cake, yes, so I should have this cake and, so to / afternoon my eh my friend is coming and my Dad and Mum's friend is coming too, so I should have birthday [?].

The two learners manage to interact meaningfully with one another, as is also shown by a comprehension check and sentence sharing. The exchange in (3) contrasts nicely with the following one in (4), where one of the Gymnasium students also learns that it is her partner's birthday, yet here there is no situationally appropriate reaction whatsoever:

(4)
J: I'm going to have a family with two ehm chil / childrens, and I'm going to live in a big house.
I: When is your birthday?
J: My birthday is now.
I: Ah, my birthday is on the sixteen ah ja of ehm of May. When is your sister's birthday?
J: My sister's birthday is in is on the twenty-seventh of February.
I: What films do you like?

The development of interactional proficiency

Many critics of approaches which dispense with formal instruction claim that the learner language will fossilize as soon as a certain level of communicative proficiency is achieved. With our data we can convincingly demonstrate that this did not happen among our Danish learner group – at least not within the first four years. The autonomous learners made an enormous step forward between the first peer-to-peer talk recordings after one and a half years of English and the second recording after four years.

Measures such as those used by Long (1981) for characterizing foreigner talk discourse (FTD) might also be adduced for assessing linguistic developments in peer-to-peer talks. Long claimed that simplified registers are typified by brief and superficial handling of topics. He calculated a ratio between topic-initiating moves and topic-continuing moves (in terms of T-units) and compared his FTD results with native-speaker interactions. The proportion of topic-initiating and topic-continuing moves showed a clear difference with far more topic-initiating moves in FTD, i.e., in talks with learner involvement. Native speakers talking to one another used a proportionally much greater number of topic-continuing moves.

If we apply the same measure to our two learner corpora of peer-to-peer talks, the difference in topic treatment becomes very obvious (Table 4). The ratio between topic-initiating and topic-continuing moves has increased from 1:6 to 1:18. In other words, learners stick to the same topic three times longer.

Another result of Long's research concerns the strategies for introducing topics. The most obvious way of starting a topic – especially in

	1994	**1996**
Topic-initiating	98	36
Topic-continuing	581	642
x	5.93	17.83
s	3.57	10.74

Table 4
Topic-initiating and topic-continuing moves

FTD – is the question. Questions account for 96% of all topic-initiating moves in Long's FDT corpus – as opposed to only 62% in the native-speaker corpus. Table 5 shows the statistics for the autonomous learners in our study. Similar statistics emerge when it comes to analysing strategies for topic continuations. What the statistics boil down to is the fact that communicatively less competent learners switch topics more often and use questions as the main strategy for introducing and developing the topic. The more proficient they become the less heavily they have to rely on questions for introducing and continuing topics.

	Questions		Statements	
	no.	%	no.	%
1994	90	91.8	8	8.2
1996	21	58.3	15	41.7

Table 5
Topic introductions

Reading/writing skills : C-Test results

Proponents of the C-test claim that it is one of the most reliable measures of reading/writing abilities – or even of global language proficiency (cf. Grotjahn 1992–96). A C-test is a variant of the cloze test in which the second half of every second word has been deleted. What made this testing instrument most suitable in our case was that it seemed to be equally (un)fair to all the learner groups, since none of them had ever come across this testing format. Table 6 summarizes the result.

When interpreting these figures the following facts should be kept in mind:

- The classes from Karlslunde *Folkeskole* are – like the GS classes from Germany – mixed ability classes. Only about 25% of the students change over to a grammar school or A-Level college.
- The autonomous class under consideration (when it was in the 7th grade) had had only half as many English lessons as the German "bilingual" *Gymnasium* class (440 compared to 680 + 120). The auton-

	N	no. of lessons	x (1995)	x (1996)
Gym-humanistisch	32	560	80.0	
Gym-bilingual	32	680 + 120	78.2	
GS-1	33	480	43.7	
GS-2	32	560	39.6	
Folkeskole 7 - trad.	19	440	54.3	48.1
Folkeskole 7b - auton.	21	440	63.5 (59.4)	
Folkeskole 8a- auton.	19	720	77.4	
8b-auton.	15	640		77.7

Explanations:

Gym-humanistisch: A class whose first foreign language is Latin.

Gym-bilingual: A *Gymnasium* with a so-called "bilingual branch": in addition to regular EFL lessons, English is also the medium of instruction for Geography (120 lessons)

GS: *Gesamtschule* (comprehensive school)

Folkeskole 7-trad.: Traditionally taught class from the same school as the class under discussion (= Folkeskole 7b-auto)

Table 6
C-Test Results

omous class took the same test again a year later (640 lessons), when their results were identical to the results of the "bilingual" grammar school class.

- 6 out of 16 autonomous learners (37.5%) scored better than the average "bilingual" *Gymnasium* students. One of the students with a score of 72 is just below the grammar school average, which means that almost half of the autonomous learners are better than or as good as the average German "bilingual" grammar school student, despite having had fewer lessons.
- Strangely enough, the average results of two different autonomous classes in the 8th grade are identical, although Folkeskole 8a-auto already started English lessons in the 4th grade, which amounts to an additional 80 lessons.

Instead of a conclusion – two text samples

Let me conclude this paper by illustrating how the learning outcomes of a classroom where the focus is on learning rather than teaching are reflected in the progress made by one of the more gifted students. After 30 weeks of learning the students were asked to describe a picture. This is what A-M wrote:

> There are some people ther swim and some people is buying ice-cream. there a two boys ther playing fooball and an old woman is reading in a book and an old man is reading in a newspaper.

After three years of English, we asked students to write a story about a sequence of six drawings entitled "Off to the Country". A-M's story reads as follows:

> Two days before my summerholiday, I reseved a letter from my mothers aunt and uncle. they live on a farm in a small village, I can't remember what the name of the village is. Anyway, I read the letter up loud to my parents, and they thought it was a splendid idea. Three days later, my Mom and Dad took me to the trainstation, my Mom had packed a suitcase for me, it was ekstreemly heavy, I was only going to be away for a week, but my Mom alway pack as if I were going to be away for a whole year.
>
> I managed to get the suitcase up in the train and find a nice (Kupe) compartment. It took three hours to get to the trainstation in the small village, it was not only a small village, but also a very small trainstation. I almost couldn't reconice my mothers uncle, he was actually wearing nice clothes. I have never seen him in such clothes before. Not that I want to be rued or anything, but he is sort of a hillbilly.
>
> My Mom's aunt welcomed me, and showed me my room, where I was going to live the upcomming week. They have a lot of animals on the farm, such as horses, pigs, chiken's, and one goose. Every morning I get up early and help feeding the animals.

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Part II

Some examples of practice

The first two papers in the second part of the book report on pedagogical practice in Danish classrooms. Tinne Seeman and Connie Tavares describe how they were converted to an autonomous learning approach partly from a desire to make their learners less passive and partly by educational legislation that stressed the pupil's role in taking responsibility for his or her learning. They illustrate their approach with reference to projects undertaken by learners in the 5th and 9th grades (respectively in their second and sixth years of learning English), stressing the importance of getting learners to evaluate their learning and its outcomes.

Hanne Thomsen tells a similar story. As a newly qualified teacher armed with the techniques and materials thought necessary for success in the communicative foreign language classroom, she found herself confronted with the problem of passive learners entirely dependent on the initiatives of the teacher. She began to change things by giving her learners scope to exercise their own initiative and engaging them in ongoing evaluation of the learning process. Her paper provides a detailed description of her general approach and the activities she uses.

Russell Whitehead's paper is concerned with adult learners of English. The idea that learner independence grows out of and feeds back into the interdependent processes of the classroom is fundamental to the theoretical position elaborated in David Little's paper, and is strongly implied by the pedagogical practice described by Leni Dam, Tinne Seeman and Connie Tavares, and Hanne Thomsen. The same idea is central to Russell Whitehead's argument, which considers practical ways of building group dynamics, negotiating learning aims, identifying the barriers that can block learning, engaging learners' personalities in the dynamic of the classroom, reflecting on previous learning, formulating solutions to problems, allocating responsibilities, and evaluating outcomes.

Marion Geddes is likewise concerned with the promotion of independence through interdependence, but in the context of a residential immersion programme rather than classroom teaching. She describes the interactive, interdependent processes by which her learners articulate their aims, come to terms with the resources available to them, develop their self-confidence, learn to take risks, acquire explicit learning strategies, plan their learning, look beyond the course, and learn to evaluate their own learning. Both Russell Whitehead and Marion Geddes conclude by emphasizing that our ultimate pedagogical purpose must always be to "let go", to hand over control to the learners.

The last paper in Part II, by Leslie Bobb Wolff, argues that teachers' and learners' traditional attitudes to mistakes must change if students are to become more autonomous and considers the points in the writing process at which the teacher can intervene to help students to assume responsibility for improving their written work. By implication Leslie Bobb Wolff assigns a central role to metacognition and metalinguistic awareness in the development of learner autonomy. In this way her paper usefully anticipates a central concern of the four papers in Part III.

Involving learners in their own learning – how to get started

Tinne Seeman and Connie Tavares

Introduction

It is probably true that there are many language teachers who hear about the importance of learner autonomy but are somehow hesitant about introducing autonomous learning approaches in their classroom. They may have misgivings about the possible reactions of pupils, parents or colleagues. They may fear that they will lose control of what happens in the classroom, that their pupils will not be capable of taking responsibility for their learning, or that they will not adequately cover the syllabus if they abandon the textbook. Teachers may also feel unsure about how to put theory into practice, and about what kinds of classroom procedures and activities they should implement in order to foster the development of learner autonomy.

As teachers who have been through the process of confronting these very issues, and of moving from a traditional textbook-based teaching approach to a more autonomous teaching-learning approach, we think our experience and personal insights may be of interest to those who have still to take the plunge. What we present here is a first-hand account of the process of change we underwent, and a brief illustration of our current classroom practice, together with our reflections on the experience as a whole.

Background

We are both teachers of English who have been working in the Danish Folkeskole sector (primary and secondary school for pupils aged from 7 to 16 years) for many years (15 and 20 years respectively). Neither of us has had access to any full-time in-service training for teachers of English since we qualified. The insights we present here therefore derive very much from our practical experience of teaching and interacting with learners from day to day, and from contact and discussion with colleagues in our school and elsewhere.

There are approximately 400 pupils in the school where we currently work (Vallensbæk Skole), and 35 teachers with an average of 18 pupils per class. It is customary for teachers of English to teach from 4th to 10th grade. Traditionally, English lessons in our school revolved very much around the textbook. For example, for pupils beginning English in the 4th grade (at the age of 9) through to the end of the 6th grade, we used the *Blue Cat* series, comprising a textbook and workbook for each year, and a teacher's book and audio-cassettes. The textbook had a very attractive lay-out, with colourful illustrations and various exercises such as cartoon strips, songs, nursery rhymes, short stories, games, riddles and crossword puzzles. In principle, we were meant to get through two pages of the textbook each lesson. Typically we would begin the lesson by getting the pupils to listen to the audio-recording of the cartoon strip story in their textbook. We would then talk to the class about the story and go on to introduce and practise some new words, using games, rhymes or songs from the textbook. Finally, the pupils would do some further practice and comprehension exercises in their workbook. All of this was set out in very explicit terms in the teacher's book, and while it made life nice and simple, many of us (teachers and pupils) became a little tired of the rather rigid routine the textbook imposed on the lesson, even if the exercises and activities were interesting in themselves. There was a sense in which the pupils were merely passive receivers most of the time, with no influence themselves on the content of the lesson, which was totally directed by the textbook and the teacher.

Somewhat more freedom was offered to the pupils from the 7th grade onwards, when we switched to using the textbook reader series *Choice*. As the name implies, this series allowed pupils to choose certain topics of interest. Pupils could choose from a range of topics such as love, consumers, adventure, meetings and environments. Within each topic, they were also able to choose various text types to work on – short stories, poems, cartoon strips, songs, pictures, and so on. Usually, they would work in pairs or groups, listening to the story on tape, practising reading and pronunciation, answering the set questions, and learning the idiomatic and essential expressions listed. In other words, once pupils selected their topic and text type, they followed a fixed pattern of activities as set out in the textbook, with the teacher keeping careful control of the learning goals specified by the textbook writers in the teacher's guide. The freedom the pupils enjoyed was therefore somewhat limited.

The process of change towards autonomy

In 1993, a new education law was passed in Denmark which emphasized the pupil's role in taking responsibility for his or her learning. At around the same time, many teachers in Denmark (including ourselves) became aware of the concept and practice of learner autonomy through Leni Dam, who provided special courses to introduce these ideas to us. It soon became clear to us that some radical changes were needed in our whole teaching approach if we were to move towards autonomy in the classroom.

However, we were also very conscious of potential problems in the move towards autonomy. A very real fear among many teachers, for example, was that we would lose our pupils' respect if we were no longer perceived to be fully in control of the classroom. As teachers we felt apprehensive about becoming (in our view) mere "advisers" rather than "controlling" events in the classroom, and we worried whether pupils would be capable of taking control, or whether things might just descend into chaos.

Another important concern was how we could ensure that pupils adequately covered the syllabus, built up sufficient vocabulary, and received the required grounding in grammar, if we did not follow a textbook that seemed to provide everything they needed. How could we guide our pupils in finding appropriate materials in place of the textbook?

Addressing these concerns and tackling the changes inevitably required a great deal of careful thought, discussion and, above all, energy. The process was not something that could simply happen overnight, but had to evolve through negotiation, trial and error. For example, we soon realized how important it was for pupils to form functional and effective working groups. Achieving this, however, could be done only by letting go of the control and having full confidence in their ability to take charge. In this way, when things did not go well, pupils were able to learn from their own mistakes because they assumed responsibility for them, and everyone in turn could benefit from this shared knowledge and experience. Not surprisingly, of course, it turned out to be a lot easier to practise autonomy in classes where pupils were already used to working in groups or pairs and to assuming a certain amount of responsibility for homework and presentations.

We ourselves are quite lucky in that most of our school colleagues have been positive in their attitude to what we try to do, and several already practise or intend to practise autonomy in their own classrooms. This supportive framework was undoubtedly a significant factor in helping us through the process of change. We have learned that teachers practising autonomy in other schools do not always enjoy such support from their colleagues and school authorities and have often met with distrust – largely, in our view, owing to a lack of understanding. Better information and communication would help to resolve such problems.

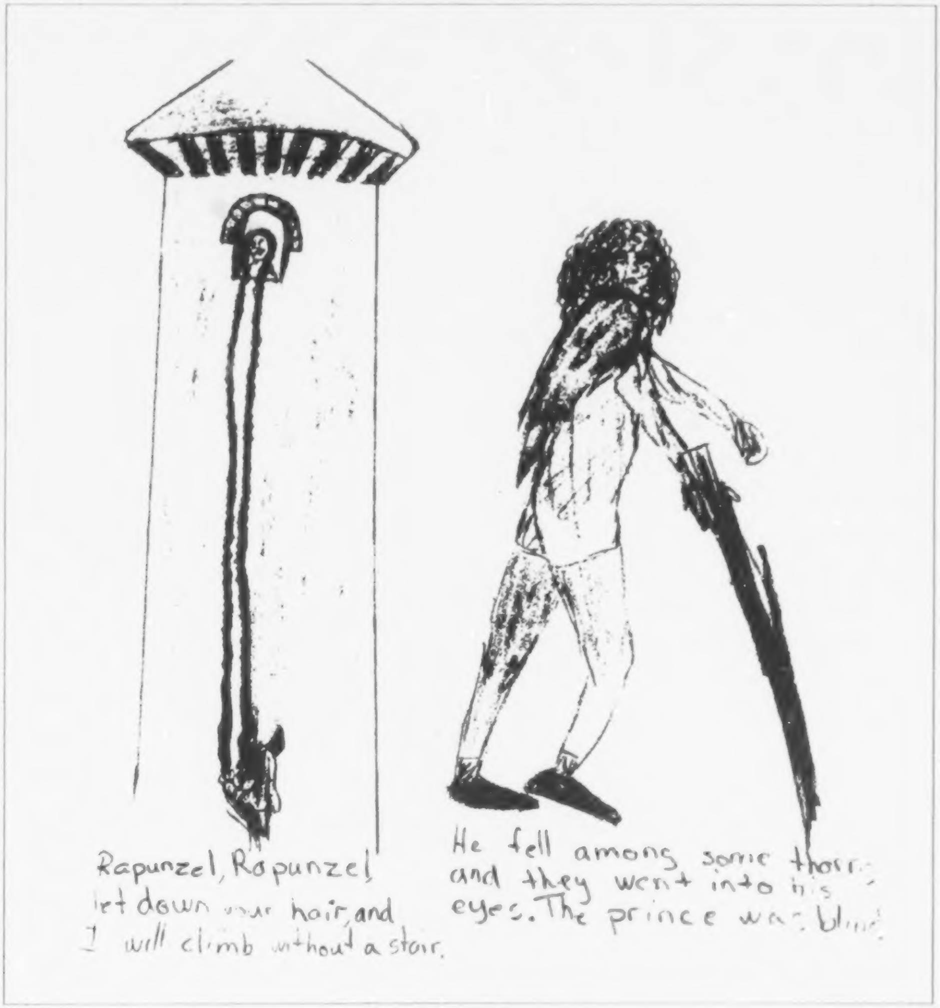
Access to information and theory is clearly important if teachers are to understand how to introduce autonomous learning on a principled basis. Ultimately, nevertheless, it is only through direct experience and reflection on experience that we as teachers can come to grips with autonomous learning processes in our own classrooms, and discover what works and what does not work for us and our learners. The following examples of our classroom practice illustrate some of the ideas and activities that we have found effective in our particular context.

Examples of classroom practice

5th grade

In 1998, the 5th grade (pupils in their second year of learning English) decided to work on the fairy tale. They began by writing in their individual learner diaries what each of them hoped to achieve from working on the topic. For example, some wanted to extend their vocabulary; others wanted to become better at pronouncing English words and speaking the language; others felt a need to improve their spelling; and yet others were keen to develop their writing skills. In short, each pupil had a good reason for wanting to participate and felt that it was important to take part. This is a vital first step for learners in any learning activity.

Input on the topic was provided by the teacher, who showed a video of cartoon stories in English based on Hans Christian Andersen's well-known fairy tales. Since the pupils were already very familiar with the fairy tales themselves, they could follow the stories without too much



Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
let down your hair, and
I will climb without a stair.

He fell among some thorns
and they went into his
eyes. The prince was blind

Figure 1
Page from a fairy tale project

difficulty and were therefore able to concentrate their attention on the linguistic input. Having watched the video and discussed the contents, the class split up into small groups of two to four pupils to decide how they wanted to work with the particular fairy tale they had chosen. One group made word cards, doing a drawing on one side of the card and writing the appropriate vocabulary item on the other. A second group wrote about the fairy tale in their diaries. A third group wrote their own fairy tale. A fourth group wrote a play based on a fairy tale, and recorded their own reading of the script on tape.

This very brief account of the fairy tale project simply serves to illustrate the varying range of activities that can be generated by a single topic. As the account shows, what is important is that the topic and the associated activities are chosen by the pupils themselves, through negotiation with one another and with the teacher, and that the pupils' engagement in their chosen activities is shaped by personal learning targets which they have individually set for themselves.

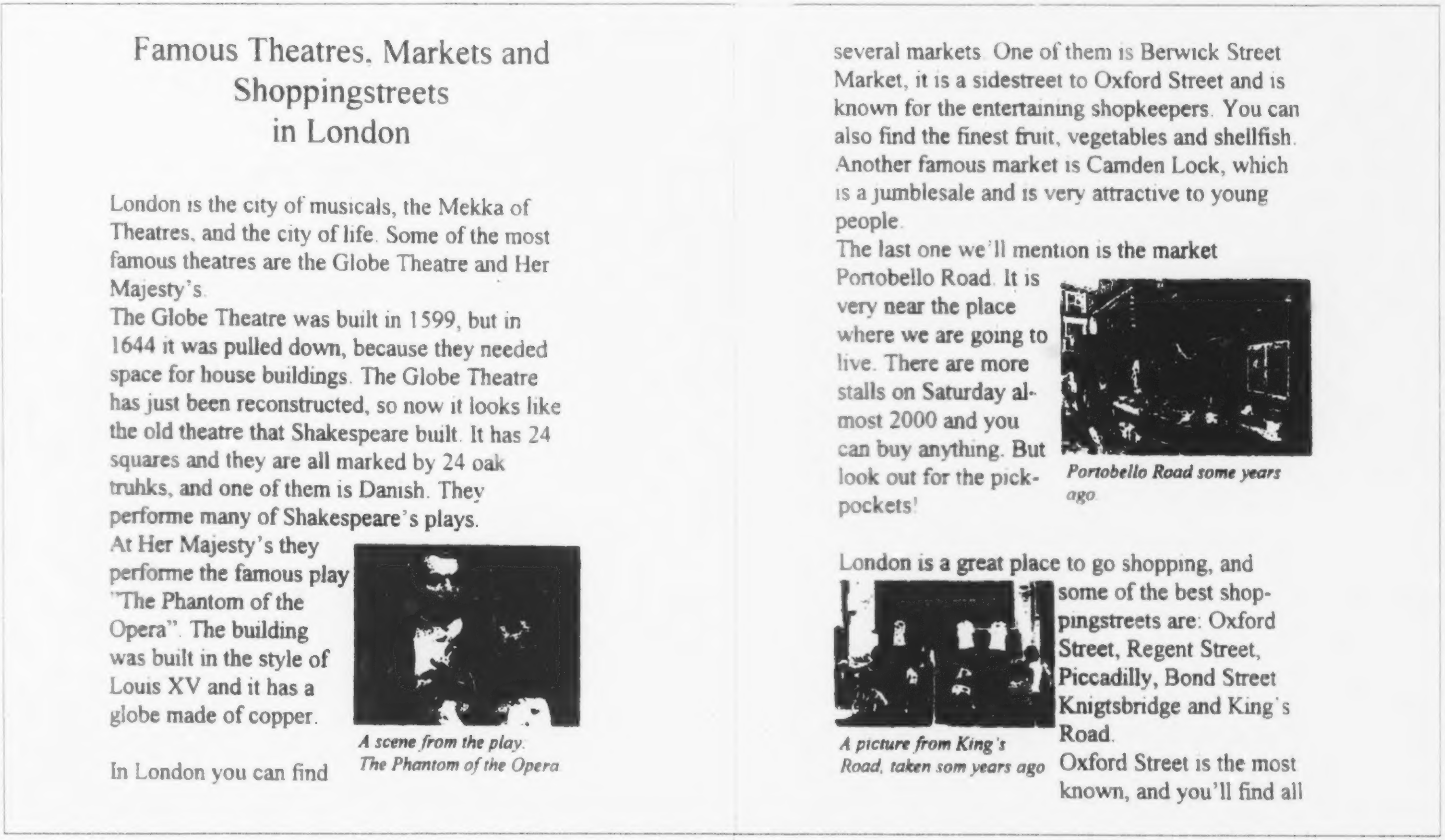
As a result, the pupils are very much in charge of their own learning process. They are engaged from the very beginning of each lesson, and always know what to do next. In their learner diaries they make plans about how they will work in class, what they will do at home, and what they will do in the following lesson. Our job as teacher is to consult the groups about their work, and of course to help in solving any problems that may arise. What continues to astonish us is how little our help is usually needed!

When a group has finished their work, they share what they have done and learnt with the rest of the class. First of all they present their work and evaluate it, and then they ask the class for their evaluations as well: How was our presentation? What did we learn? What was good? What was bad? What can we do better next time? How did we work together? By sharing their learning products, reflections and experiences in this way, pupils can find out what other groups in the class are doing, and can also learn from one another. Very often, for example, new groups will form who want to try out what another group was working on.

9th grade

In the 9th grade, pupils usually get an opportunity of visiting a foreign country to practise their language skills. In 1998, the 9th grade opted to go to London. In order to prepare themselves for this visit, the class did some brainstorming to find out what they knew about London and what they should do when they got there. They then hit upon the idea of producing a guide, concentrating on tourist sights, events and musicals. The class split up into groups to work on these different areas. Each group planned their work by asking themselves the following questions:

- What are we going to experience/see?
- Where are we going to find information (e.g., information technol-



Famous Theatres, Markets and Shoppingstreets in London

London is the city of musicals, the Mekka of Theatres, and the city of life. Some of the most famous theatres are the Globe Theatre and Her Majesty's.

The Globe Theatre was built in 1599, but in 1644 it was pulled down, because they needed space for house buildings. The Globe Theatre has just been reconstructed, so now it looks like the old theatre that Shakespeare built. It has 24 squares and they are all marked by 24 oak truhks, and one of them is Danish. They performe many of Shakespeare's plays.

At Her Majesty's they performe the famous play "The Phantom of the Opera". The building was built in the style of Louis XV and it has a globe made of copper.

A scene from the play.
The Phantom of the Opera

In London you can find several markets. One of them is Berwick Street Market, it is a sidestreet to Oxford Street and is known for the entertaining shopkeepers. You can also find the finest fruit, vegetables and shellfish. Another famous market is Camden Lock, which is a jumblesale and is very attractive to young people.

The last one we'll mention is the market Portobello Road. It is very near the place where we are going to live. There are more stalls on Saturday almost 2000 and you can buy anything. But look out for the pickpockets!

Portobello Road some years ago

London is a great place to go shopping, and some of the best shoppingstreets are: Oxford Street, Regent Street, Piccadilly, Bond Street Knigtsbridge and King's Road.

A picture from King's Road, taken som years ago

Oxford Street is the most known, and you'll find all

Figure 2
Pages from the learners' London guide

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ogy, books, newspapers, magazines, relevant persons, films)?
- Who is doing what and why?
- How are we going to present our work?

Needless to say, the pupils were greatly looking forward to going to London and as a result were very motivated in their work and did not need any extra direction from the teacher. On top of this, it should be emphasized that by this stage of their learning pupils really enjoyed taking responsibility and were totally in control. They knew exactly what they wanted to do, worked constantly, and talked in English all the time. There was certainly no time wasted sitting back, being passive and waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do!

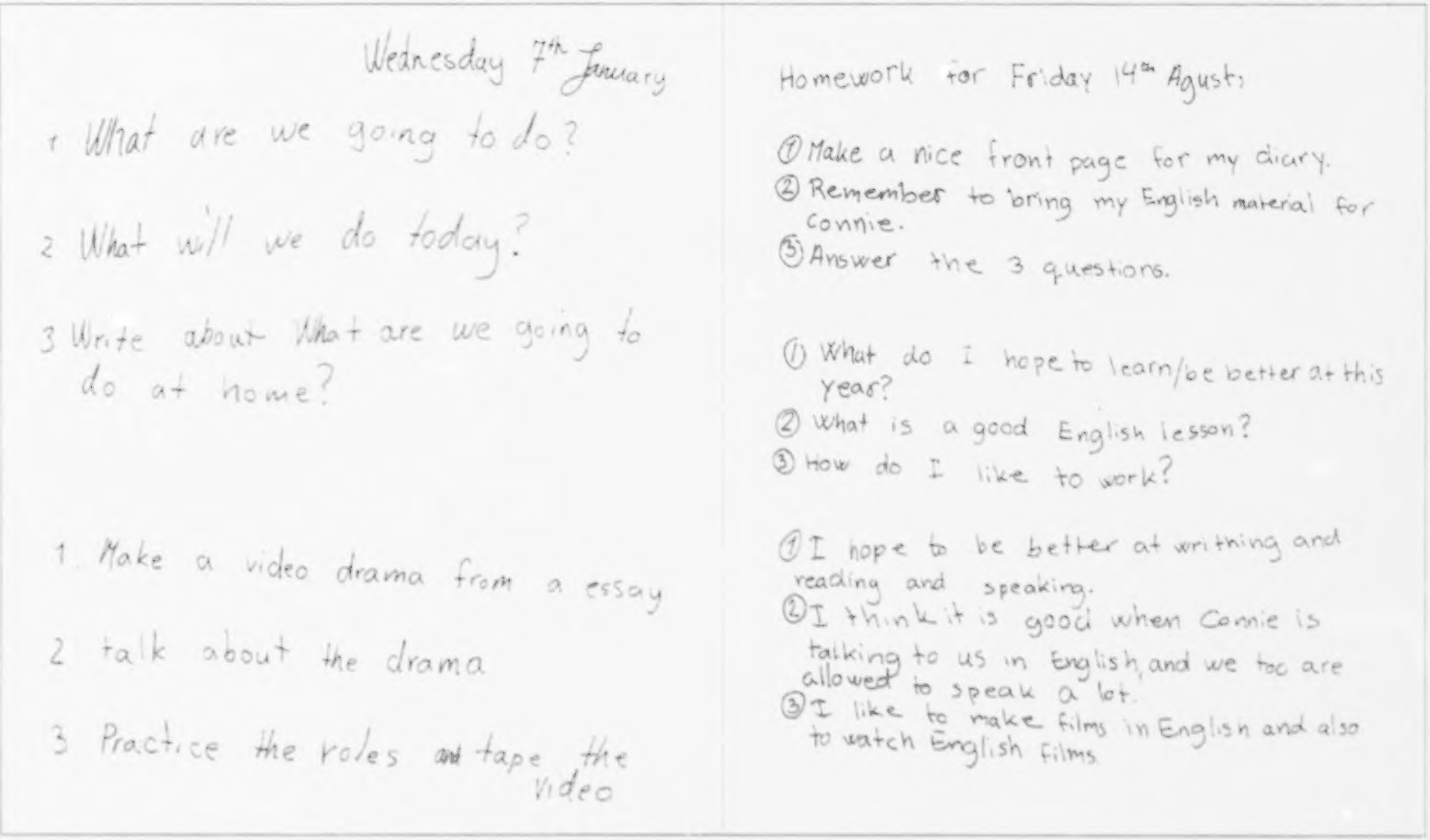
When the groups had finished their guides to London, they presented them to the rest of the class. Each presentation was then evaluated in terms of the following questions:

- What was good/bad?
- What could be done better?
- How did we co-operate?
- Did I contribute? With what?
- What did I learn?

Pupils also wrote their own self-evaluations in their diaries in response to these questions. The diary is an especially important tool in our classroom, and normally the last ten minutes of each English lesson is devoted to writing plans, reflections and evaluations in the diary. Here is an example of what a diary contains:

- Day and date
- What have we done today?
- What are we going to do tomorrow?
- How did we work together?
- What was good/bad?
- What did I learn?
- Homework

Noting down plans and decisions in the diary ensures that all members of a group agree on what they are doing and why. The diary is also a means for the teacher to "connect" with individual learners and track their progress. For example, in addition to work done in class and for homework, pupils will also use their diaries to write short reviews of English books they have read. The teacher may add comments in the diary, or raise questions to prompt further reflection. As an overall record of learning, the diary also helps the teacher to identify which



Wednesday 7th January

1 What are we going to do?

2 What will we do today?

3 Write about What are we going to do at home?

1 Make a video drama from a essay

2 talk about the drama

3 Practice the roles and tape the video

Homework for Friday 14th Agust;

① Make a nice front page for my diary.
② Remember to bring my English materal for Connie.
③ Answer the 3 questions.

① What do I hope to learn/be better at this year?
② What is a good English lesson?
③ How do I like to work?

① I hope to be better at writhing and reading and speaking.
② I think it is good when Connie is talking to us in English, and we too are allowed to speak a lot.
③ I like to make films in English and also to watch English Films

Figure 3
Pages from learners' diaries

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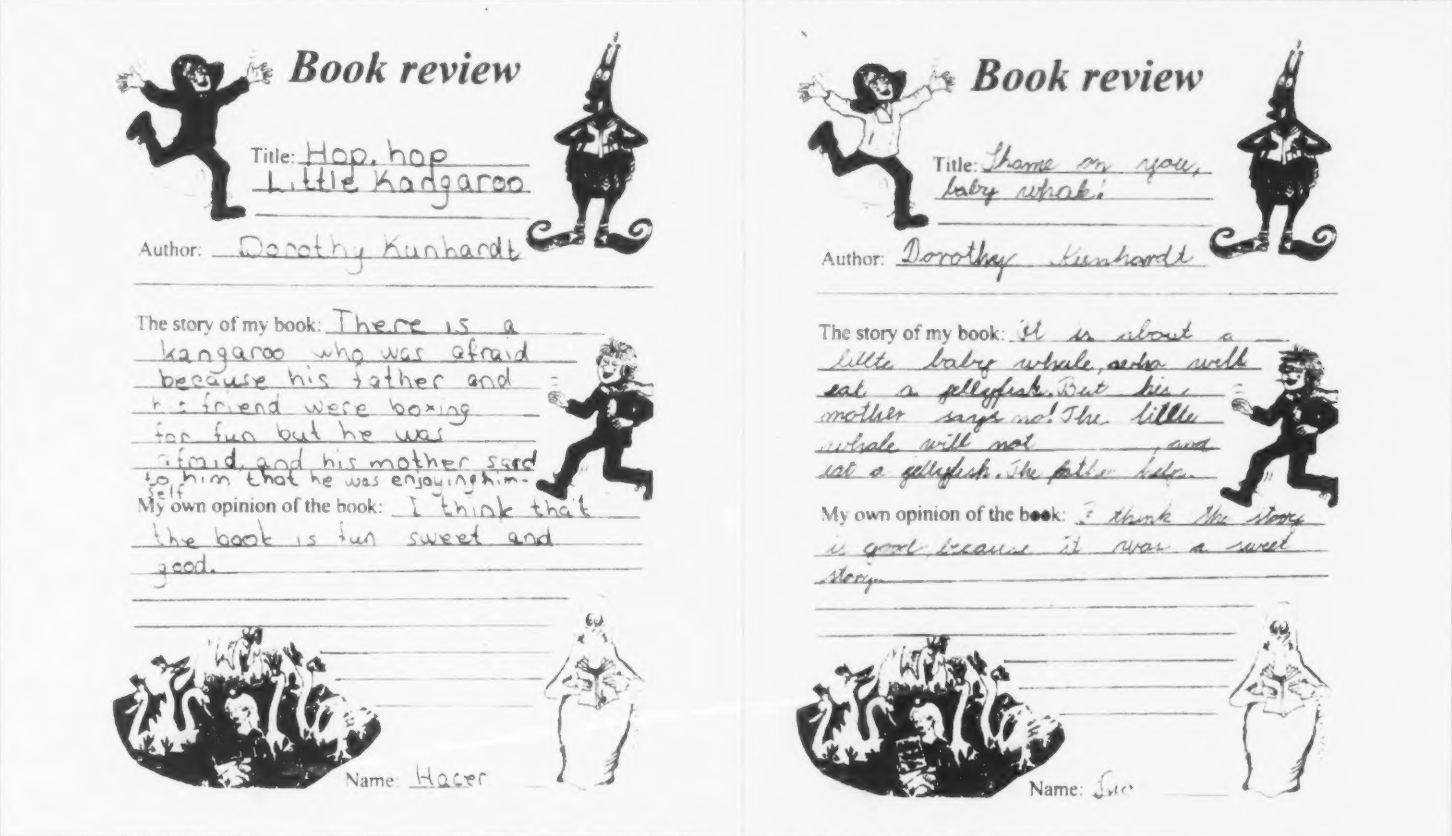


Book review

Title: Hop. hop
Little Kangaroo

Author: Dorothy Kunhardt

The story of my book: There is a kangaroo who was afraid because his father and his friend were boxing for fun but he was afraid. and his mother said to him that he was enjoying himself

My own opinion of the book: I think that the book is fun sweet and good.

Name: Hacer

Book review

Title: Shame on you, baby whale!

Author: Dorothy Kunhardt

The story of my book: It is about a little baby whale, who will eat a jellyfish. But his mother says no! The little whale will not , and eat a jellyfish. The father helps.

My own opinion of the book: I think the story is good because it was a sweet story.

Name: Sue

Figure 4
Learners' book reviews

classroom activities have been particularly successful, and which have been less successful or less useful.

Reflections

From this brief account of our experience, it should be clear that we ourselves have thoroughly welcomed the move to autonomous learning in our classrooms and can see the major benefits it has bestowed on our learners. Of course, there are problems to be overcome, but that is true whatever approach you adopt. There is the problem of time. When pupils plan their own work it can take a great deal of time, and with only three English lessons per week this can be difficult. Possible solutions might be to swap some lessons with colleagues, or to organize a special "English week". Learner autonomy also demands a great deal of co-operation, and problems can sometimes arise when this breaks down, usually within a particular group. Occasionally, a pupil may end up working on his or her own as a result. But often the teacher has a useful role to play here in getting the teamwork to function more effectively, perhaps by helping the group to identify and set new goals and rules for themselves.

The virtues of autonomous learning are without question. Of course, they have been praised and written about elsewhere (see for example other papers in this volume), but we would like to highlight the positive aspects that we have experienced as teachers who have made the transition to learner autonomy only relatively recently. What strikes us is that pupils become very enthusiastic about learning English when they are given the freedom to choose what they want to work on. By setting their own learning goals, they begin to feel responsible for what they are doing and in control of their own learning. Being responsible also means being very active as learners, and being active can often lead to greater creativity. This creativity may relate to the development of artistic and performance skills (e.g., through drama and songs); the development of important professional skills (e.g., the ability to communicate effectively with a high level of content, using an elaborated code); or the development of useful technical skills (e.g., using information technology or a video camera).

On a broader front, there are positive repercussions too for the development of important social skills. Pupils work with different peers all the time, and as a result learn a lot from each other, and learn also to accept and respect one another's differences. Being a useful member of modern society requires an ability to adapt oneself to new conditions, and to be co-operative, creative and productive. Working together in an autonomous learning environment undoubtedly helps to equip pupils with these necessary and valuable skills.

Learners' favoured activities in the *autonomous classroom*

Hanne Thomsen

In this paper, I will recount my experiences of working for a number of years with mixed-ability learners (aged 10–17) in autonomous language classrooms in a Danish comprehensive school. I will focus on and give examples of activities which give scope for differentiated processes as well as products; activities which take into account the individual learner's needs and interests, but at the same time make group interaction and co-operation possible. I will show how the activities are presented to the learners, how they are used and developed, and finally how they are evaluated by the learners as well as the teacher.

I will begin with some background information about my own teaching experience, my learners, and the classroom settings we work in. Here I will also draw attention to the use of logbooks and posters, and indicate the types of materials available for the learners. Then I will focus on the particular activities that learners favour and describe how they are organized.

The teacher – and the learners

I have worked in Karslunde Skole (a Danish comprehensive school) for twenty years as a teacher of Danish, German and English. Thinking back to when I began my career as a newly-trained teacher, armed with an array of teacher-directed methods and techniques in my rucksack, I recall how I tried to address the problem and the challenge of coping with a mixed-ability group of learners. Three issues come to mind:

- *Variation* – I brought into the classroom a variety of different materials, activities and forms of organization. I worked hard to come up with new and exciting things for almost every lesson, and spent a lot of time instructing the learners to do this and that. Riding my bicycle on my way home from school, I would evaluate the usefulness of my efforts and begin planning the next steps. Only occasionally did I elicit from the learners what they thought about the work they had undertaken.

- *Initiatives* – It is clear to me now – and it was what I expected of myself as a teacher then – that nearly all the initiatives were mine. I was the "owner of the projects", and through my enthusiasm I succeeded in making the learners take part in "my projects" with enjoyment and good results – or else I talked them into it. If I was away from school for a few days, it would honestly come as a surprise to me to discover how little work my learners had been able to do with their substitute teacher in my absence. After all, as I thought, they knew perfectly well what an English lesson should be like and had been instructed in advance. "But your colleague is not like you," they would say. And no doubt you can hear me moralizing then, "It was your own responsibility. I expected you to ..." The point was – as I see it now – that they were never allowed to take any of the initiatives or to have any responsibilities for what was going on in the lessons, let alone for their own learning.
- *The individual* – Looking back in the mirror, I see clearly now that I was primarily teaching a class then, and not 25 individuals. I had hardly any chances to get to know the individual learner. Simply organizing the lessons took up most of my energy.

So I had to change things. I had realized that all my efforts had side effects that I certainly did not want: my learners expected to be entertained while learning English; in a way they were "passive" recipients and consumers largely dependent on their teacher, and they did not want to take any responsibility for what was going on. And why should they?

In 1981 I had a new German class – a group of 13-year-olds whom I already knew quite well. By then I had come across the notion of learner autonomy (as defined by Henri Holec), and thanks to my collaboration with Leni Dam and Gerd Gabrielsen and their own interest in learner autonomy, I was able to identify two fundamental issues that would shape my first attempts towards developing learner autonomy:

- *Learner initiatives* – I wanted to give learners scope to use their personal experiences as well as their learning experiences; to make choices for themselves; to learn for themselves; and to integrate their new knowledge with what they already knew. I was aware, of course, that some learners are very active and self-assured and find it challenging and easy to say "I'd like to ...". Others, on the other hand, would need support in order to be able or willing to exercise the same kind of choice. Focusing on learner initiatives means that you have to allow for different initiatives at the same time, and that you have to be prepared to organize things accordingly.

- *Evaluation as an ongoing process* – I wanted to give learners the opportunity, while learning, of reflecting upon the learning process and of talking about it with others. In this way I hoped that they would gradually gain a more explicit awareness of their own learning, as well as insight into the learning process. And in doing so, they would be able to answer all the well-known questions (what? why? how? what next?), and through their new insight, reach a better and more refined point of departure for the next initiative.

The classroom

In Denmark, children start learning English from the age of 10, and German or sometimes French from the age of 13. Let me now take you into one of my classes – a German class of 24 learners (a mixed-ability group) who work in their own classroom. Figure 1 reproduces a drawing of a German lesson that was done by a pupil of mine. As you can see, the learners are organized in groups, and are busy writing the

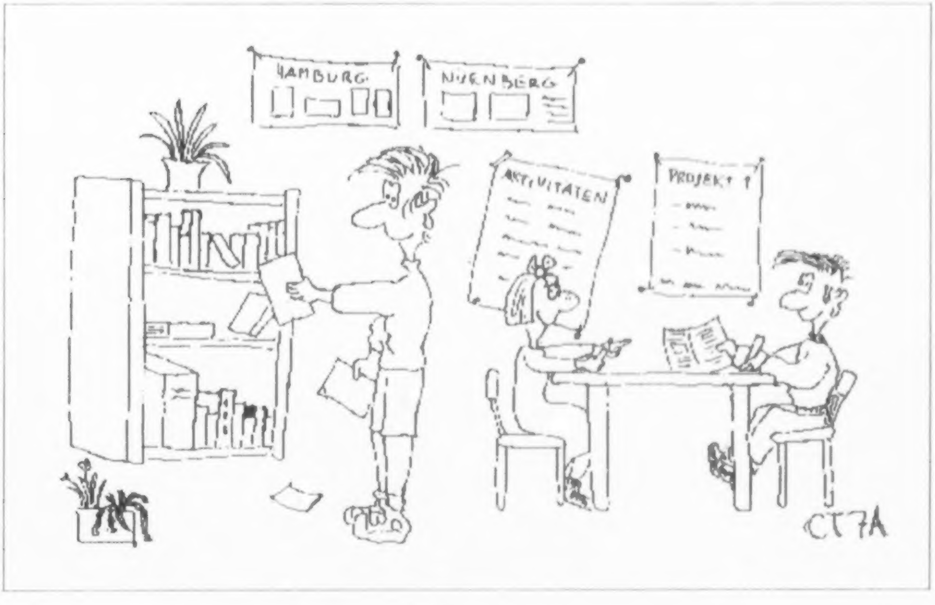


Figure 1
Drawing of a German lesson

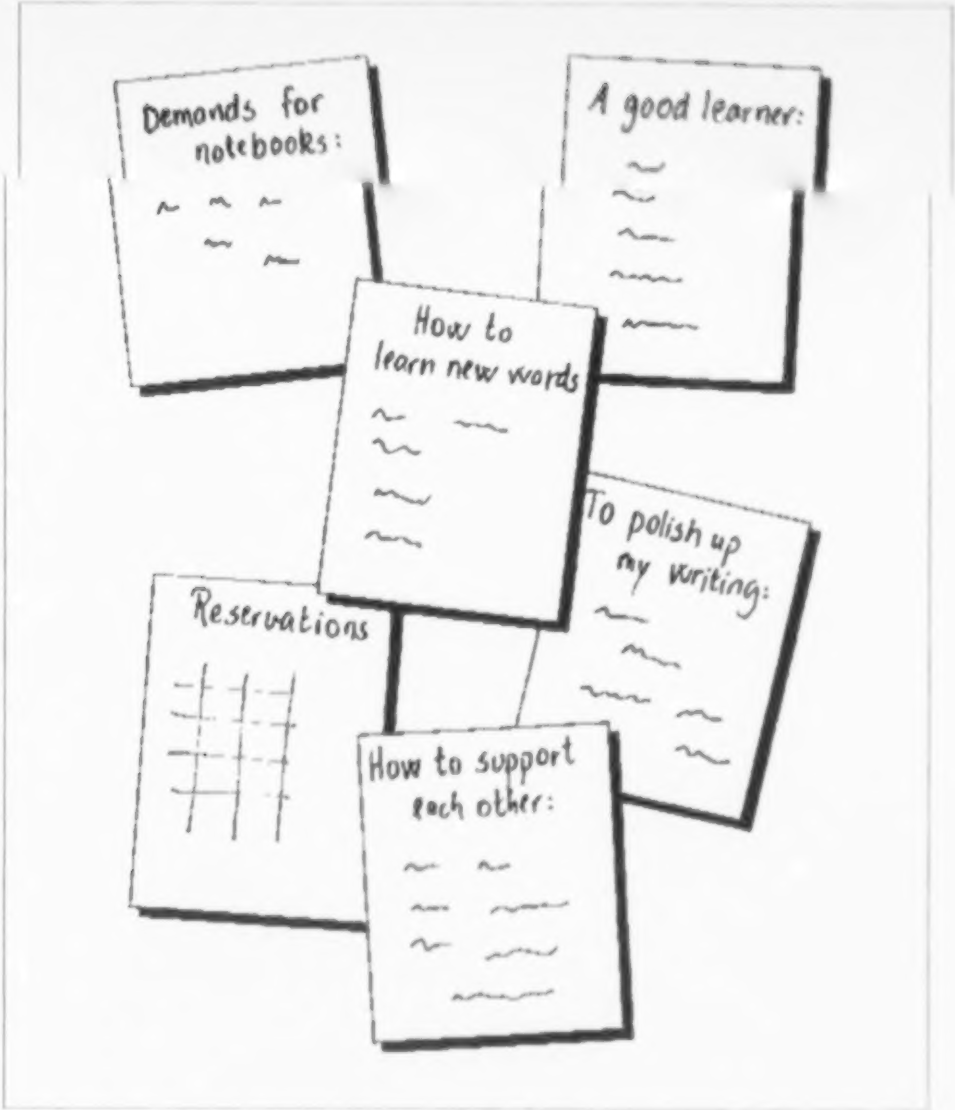
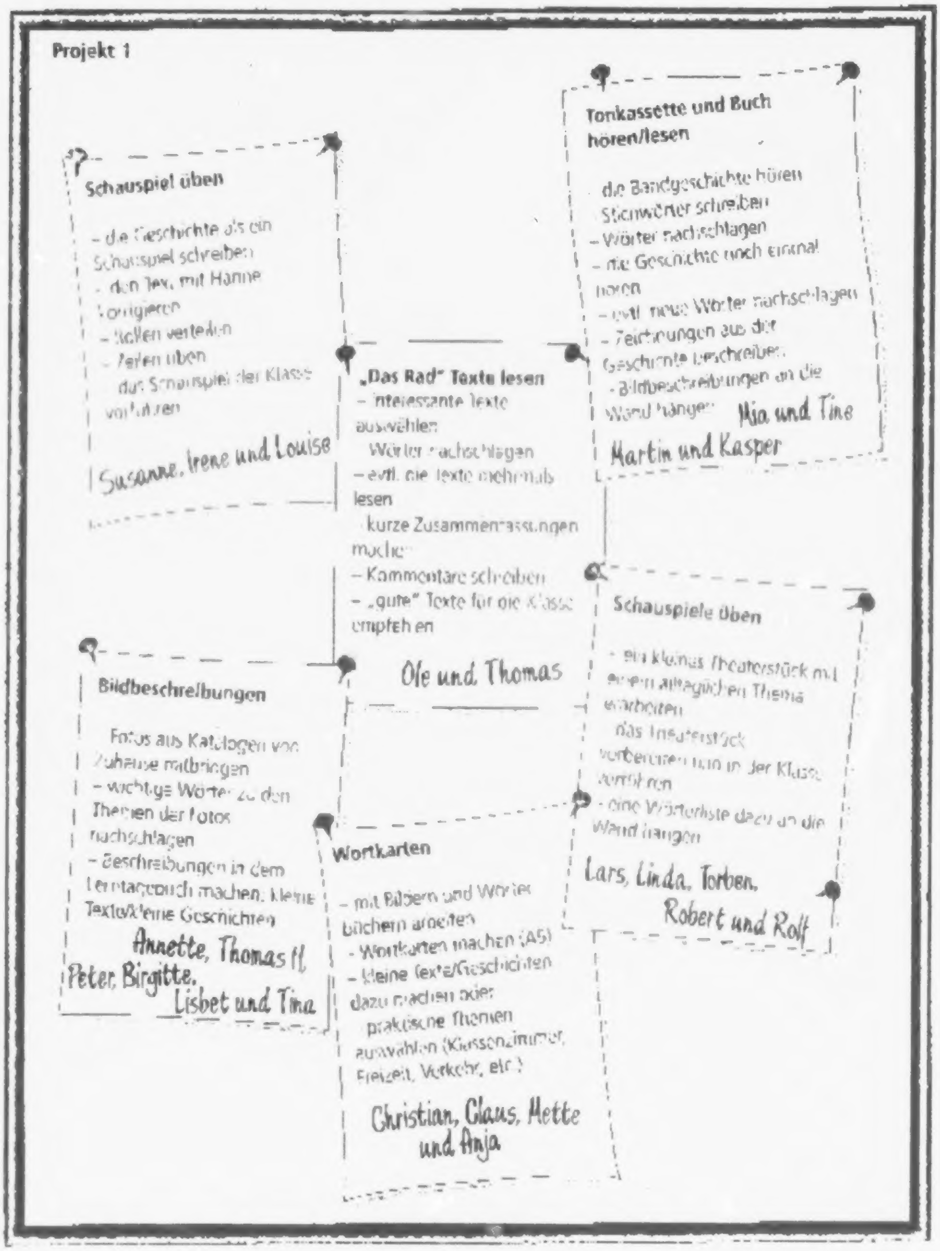

Demands for notebooks:
A good learner:
How to learn new words
To polish up my writing:
Reservations
How to support each other:

Figure 2
Posters with general information

agenda for today's work in their logbooks according to a shared plan. There is a boy choosing some materials from the selection available for the learners in their classroom. This selection includes resource books (dictionaries and grammar books) and content materials (course books, magazines, newspapers, extra readers on facts and fiction, song books,



Projekt 1

Schauspiel üben

- die Geschichte als ein Schauspiel schreiben
- den Text mit Hanne korrigieren
- Rollen verteilen
- Zeilen üben
- das Schauspiel der Klasse vorführen

Susanne, Irene und Louise

„Das Rad" Texte lesen

- interessante Texte auswählen
- Wörter nachschlagen
- evtl. die Texte mehrmals lesen
- kurze Zusammenfassungen machen
- Kommentare schreiben
- „gute" Texte für die Klasse empfehlen

Ole und Thomas

Tonkassette und Buch hören/lesen

- die Bandgeschichte hören
- Stichwörter schreiben
- Wörter nachschlagen
- die Geschichte noch einmal hören
- evtl. neue Wörter nachschlagen
- Zeichnungen aus der Geschichte beschreiben
- Bildbeschreibungen an die Wand hängen

Mia und Tine
Martin und Kasper

Bildbeschreibungen

- Fotos aus Katalogen von Zuhause mitbringen
- wichtige Wörter zu den Themen der Fotos nachschlagen
- Beschreibungen in dem Lerntagebuch machen: kleine Texte/kleine Geschichten

Annette, Thomas H.
Peter, Birgitte,
Lisbet und Tina

Schauspiele üben

- ein kleines Theaterstück mit einem alltäglichen Thema erarbeiten
- das Theaterstück vorbereiten und in der Klasse vorführen
- eine Wörterliste dazu an die Wand hängen

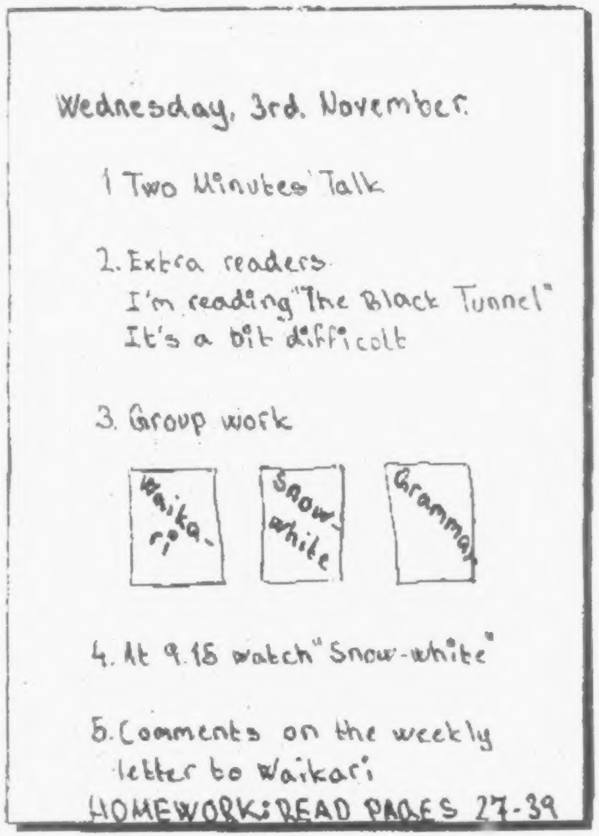
Lars, Linda, Torben,
Robert und Rolf

Wortkarten

- mit Bildern und Wörterbüchern arbeiten
- Wortkarten machen (A5)
- kleine Texte/Geschichten dazu machen oder
- praktische Themen auswählen (Klassenzimmer, Freizeit, Verkehr, etc.)

Christian, Claus, Mette
und Anja

Figure 3
Posters describing actual projects/activities



Wednesday, 3rd. November.

1 Two Minutes' Talk

2. Extra readers.
I'm reading "The Black Tunnel"
It's a bit difficolt

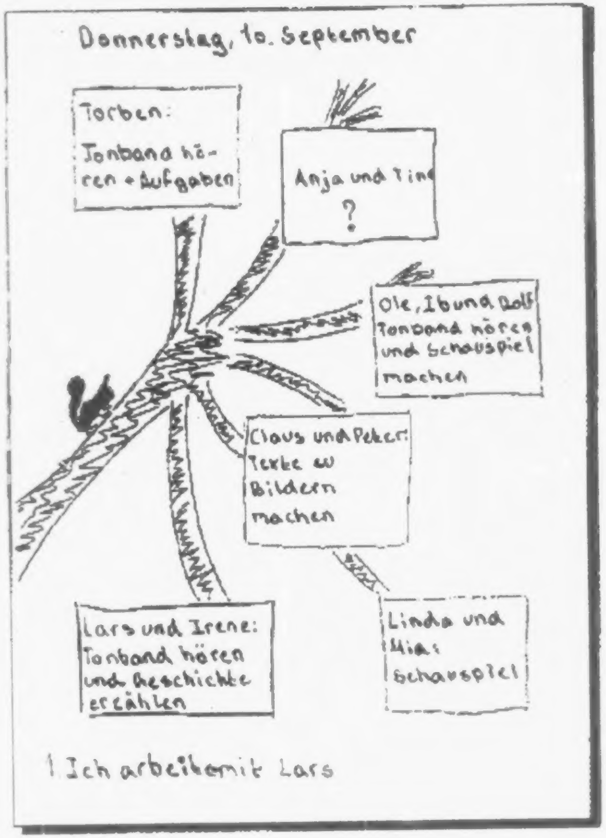
3. Group work

Waikari
Snow-white
Grammar

4. At 9.15 watch "Snow-white"

5. Comments on the weekly letter to Waikari

HOMEWORK: READ PAGES 27-39



Donnerstag, 10. September

Torben: Tonband hören + Aufgaben
Anja und Tin
?
Ole, Ib und Rolf Tonband hören und Schauspiel machen
Claus und Peter: Texte zu Bildern machen
Lars und Irene: Tonband hören und Geschichte erzählen
Linda und Mia: Schauspiel

1. Ich arbeitemit Lars

Figure 4
Extracts from learners' logbooks

poetry books, pictures, games, learners' own materials, etc.). On the noticeboard there are various posters displayed. These are for the purposes of keeping track of projects and recording shared information, agreements, requests, evaluations, "good ideas", etc. A closer look at these posters shows two types: posters with general information, as reproduced in Figure 2, and more specific posters describing actual projects or activities and the organization of the class, as reproduced in Figure 3. The two extracts from learner logbooks reproduced in Figure 4 also show two typical ways of keeping track.

It is vitally important that the learner has an agenda for the lesson and for homework and an overall view of what is going on in the classroom so that he can answer the question: what has my activity got to do with what my peers are involved in? As you may have noticed, the teacher herself is not in the drawing reproduced in Figure 1. But she is in the classroom, sitting at the tables with the learners talking to them (in the target language) about their work, about the process as well as the products; giving input when needed; supporting learner initiatives or suggesting alternatives; bringing in examples of materials; insisting on a good atmosphere; observing and evaluating with the learners. She addresses the whole class at the beginning and at the end of the lesson, making sure that all the pupils know what to do, and that the successes and problems they experience during the course of their learning are given appropriate attention. In short, the classroom can be viewed as a laboratory where people are engaged in different activities and ways of working. All are participants (the learners and the teacher) in the ongoing pursuit of the best ways of learning German.

Learners' favoured activities

According to one of my classes, the criteria for a good activity are that it should be meaningful, you should learn from it, and it should be not too easy and not too difficult; to which I have added that it should give scope for different learners' interests/needs and for co-operation, and should be open-ended and entail differentiated processes as well as products.

The following list shows examples of "good activities" that learners have worked with in a lot of my classes. I shall go further into some of them to describe how they were presented to learners, how they worked with them, and finally how they were evaluated by the learners and the teacher.

Favoured Activities:

- to make a diary
- to make word cards
- to make posters
- to read texts of one's own choice
- to learn about English-speaking countries
- two-minute talks
- to have pen pals
- to use pictures
- to make small books
- to make word games
- to do project work
- to make plays
- to work with proverbs
- to work with poetry
- to watch films/videos
- to write: authentic communication/as practice
- to reflect upon the process of learning
- to talk with others about what, how, when.

Different activities at the same time

In their very first German lesson, a group of learners suggested the following activities: *Schauspiele* (plays), *kleine Bücher* (little books), *neue Wörter* (new words), *Buch/Band* (book/tape). They were familiar with these activities from their English classes and therefore it did not take long to describe them. All the learners were satisfied with the choices possible within these activities and the class was divided into smaller groups/pairs. In effect, the learners were now experimenting with a familiar set of activities in a new language on behalf of the class as well as for themselves. Together with me, they were designing and getting used to the framework of their German class. The organization of the 90-minute lesson was as follows:

1 The opening: who is going to do what with whom ?
2 Individual/pair/group work
3 Closing of the lesson, including comments on different aspects of the learning process and planning ahead for the next lesson

At the same time, the learners were getting used to working with the process tools mentioned earlier: logbooks and posters. They were working in pairs/groups on the activities, learning (about) the new language, and preparing for their role as "researchers", reflecting on what they were doing and why, in order to communicate these reflections as input to the rest of the class. Learners who liked to act were learning lines by heart (from a tape and a text), adding a few personal things to the plot, and rehearsing for "the performance". Other learners were reading a German booklet for the first time, looking up words in the dictionary and thereby discovering the similarities between Danish and German vocabularies. Some were making their own vocabulary lists using word cards and posters, and constructing for themselves an appropriate system of categorizing words. These learners soon became familiar with an important grammatical phenomenon: word genders. And finally a group of learners sat listening to a taped picture story, getting accustomed to German sounds, words, phrases, and spelling. At the end of every lesson I would invite the learners to give comments on various things of interest to them to emphasize the importance of reflection. The final evaluation of the activities would serve as a better point of departure for the individual learner when deciding for himself about his next initiative in German.

Focus on one activity: e.g., to read books – of one's own choice

In our library we have quite a good collection of readers of various kinds and at different levels. Some of the books are taped stories as well. During the first terms some learners start reading books in the new language on their own, trying out different reading strategies and techniques. Then on a particular day, "reading books" is an activity that all learners are involved in at my request. The focus is now on types of books, criteria for "good books", how to read them, how to learn from them, what they might lead on to, etc. Learners will work in pairs or individually. The agenda for the lessons will look as follows:

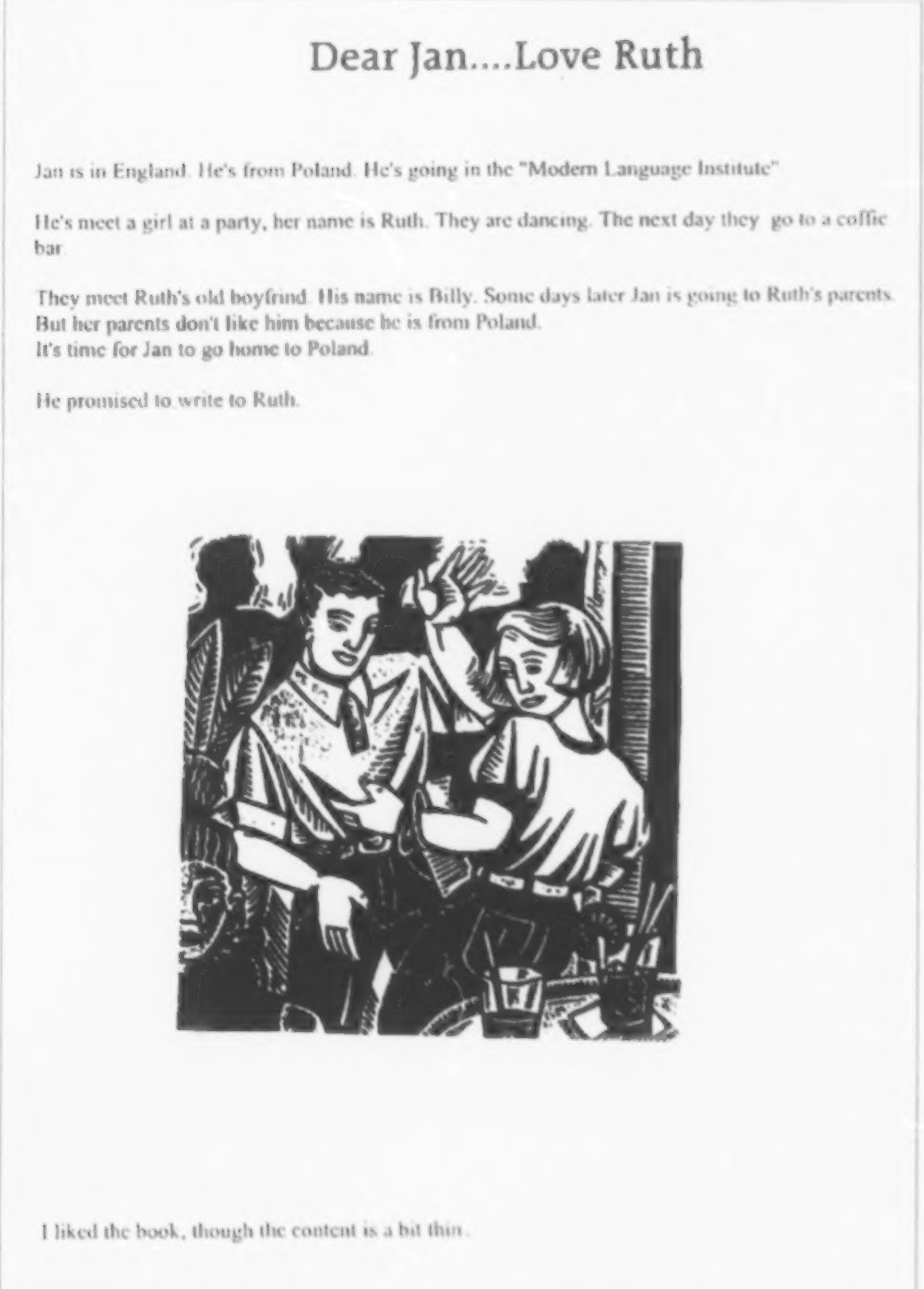
1 Today's book. (A presentation of a book: title, author, setting, characters, plot, coda – and a personal opinion about it. Suitability for ...?)
2 Reading in pairs/individually. (Focus on new words, activities, analysis of the text, connection with other texts, preparation for presentations, etc.)

3 Comments on .....(Written individual evaluation of today's work. How did you get on with what you intended? Problems? Successes?)
4 "An appetiser". A short extract from another "good" book which might be of interest to some of the learners. Or facts about settings/authors which might increase their understanding or their interest in reading.
5 Homework: read pages ... in "... ...".

"Reading books of one's own choice" is a recurring activity over the years, with focus on different aspects. Recent work with a 6th form class (12-year-olds in their 3rd year of learning English) led to the production of the following list of activities which put stress on learning from reading. The learners and I compiled the list together, drawing on our experience from previous work. The list helps learners to keep track of what they are doing and to improve their own learning. They are, of course, free to choose different activities from the list.

Read – understand – LEARN
1 Read aloud or in silence
2 Look up new words in the dictionary
3 Learn new words – e.g., by
  - making word chains
  - making word pyramids
  - changing one word in each sentence
  - making an alphabet exercise (answer, because, choice, dance, etc.)
  - writing a cloze test (with every 8th word missing)
4 Note down pronunciation
5 Practise spelling – morphemes, suffixes, etc.
6 Retell the main content
7 Translate into Danish
8 Make a book review for the library
9 Make an interview with a peer about his/her book.

From the same class book reviews were presented at the beginning of the lesson on "Today's book", and displayed on noticeboards in our library. Two examples are reproduced in Figures 5 and 6. As can be seen, all learners did find "good books" to read and enjoyed reading them.



Dear Jan....Love Ruth

Jan is in England. He's from Poland. He's going in the "Modern Language Institute"

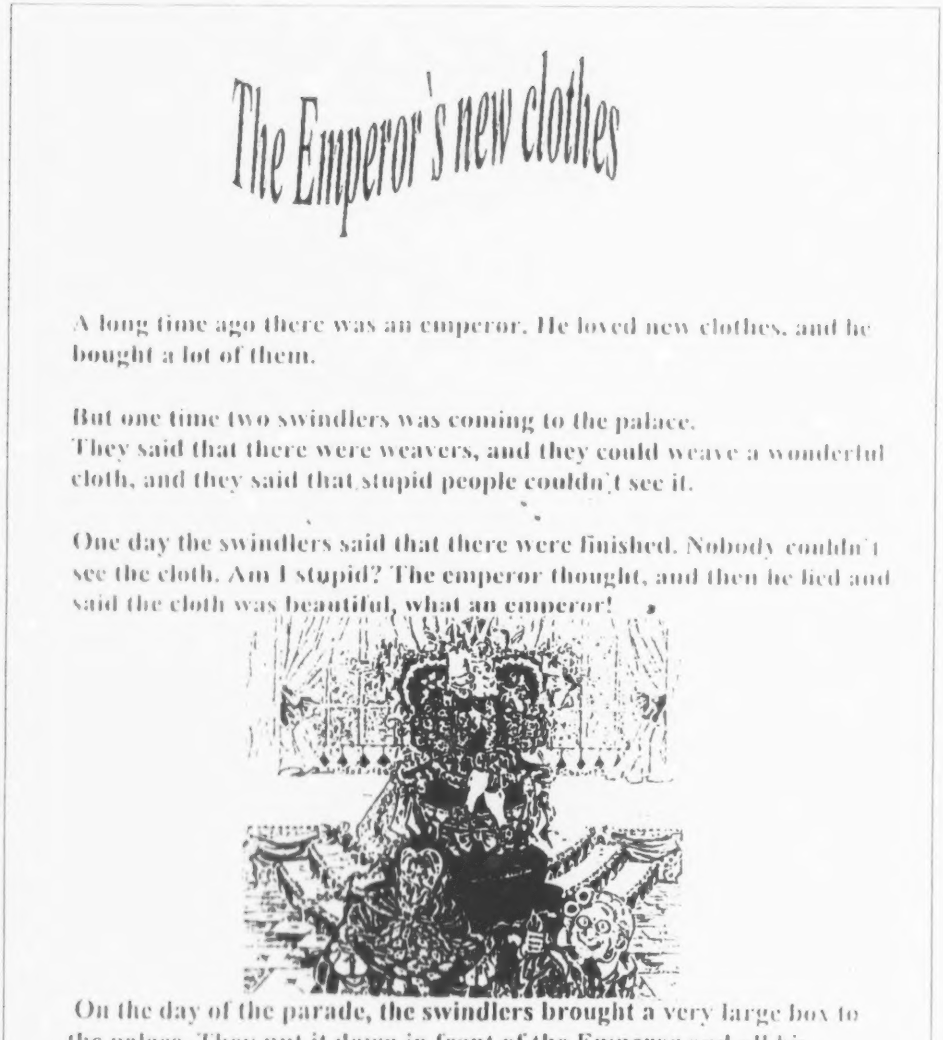
He's meet a girl at a party, her name is Ruth. They are dancing. The next day they go to a coffie bar

They meet Ruth's old boyfrind. His name is Billy. Some days later Jan is going to Ruth's parents.
But her parents don't like him because he is from Poland.
It's time for Jan to go home to Poland.

He promised to write to Ruth.

I liked the book, though the content is a bit thin.

Figure 5
Example of a learner's book review



The Emperor's new clothes

A long time ago there was an emperor. He loved new clothes, and he bought a lot of them.

But one time two swindlers was coming to the palace.
They said that there were weavers, and they could weave a wonderful cloth, and they said that stupid people couldn't see it.

One day the swindlers said that there were finished. Nobody couldn't see the cloth. Am I stupid? The emperor thought, and then he lied and said the cloth was beautiful, what an emperor!

On the day of the parade, the swindlers brought a very large box to the palace. They put it down in front of the Emperor and all his ministers and noble lords......................................!!!!!

The drawings are extremle funny, and we like the book.

Figure 6
Example of a learner's book review

From now on it became part of their homework for all English lessons to read books. It was for them to decide what books and how much they could manage to read.

To work within the same activity: e.g., to make plays
In most of my classes, pupils soon come up with the suggestion of making plays in the new language. A lot of beginners find it thrilling to be able to act and to play with the new language in this way. They think it is wonderful to have everyone else's attention and admiration when they are presenting the play in class. As time passes, more and more pupils often pluck up the courage to risk this quite demanding activity as well, but in my experience there are always a few who prefer to avoid it because they lack the self-confidence. The "actors and actresses" of the class have so far worked with and presented many different types of plays: they have acted out plays written by others (drawn from textbooks, readers, exercise books, etc.); they have added to and adapted similar plays; and they have ended up creating new plays themselves based on their own experiences and knowledge of the world. The plays are quite advanced in terms of use of language, props, music, songs, effects, programmes, etc. Often they lead on to a discussion of current affairs. Sometimes the scripts are circulated beforehand so that the spectators can read them in advance. And there comes a time when I take the initiative and suggest that the whole class should produce a play together, including the experienced actors and actresses as well as those who would never volunteer readily. Most learners are very enthusiastic about the idea, but certainly not all of them!

In the first phase of producing the play everybody is asked to imagine what it would be like to stand on stage in front of an audience. What would they like to look like? What kind of costumes, make-up, props will they have? What would they like to do? What sort of person would they like to be? One by one they start to describe or draw the kind of character they want to play. These posters are displayed on the noticeboard, and together we then try to work out a common story-line that could involve all of these characters.

Setting a deadline after four lessons is a good way to keep the processes of negotiation as effective as possible. Pupils come up with lots of different ideas about what might happen in the play – where, when, how and why? It is useful to tape-record events so that all the ideas can be easily recalled when writing summaries for the following lesson.

Once the story has been decided on, it then has to be divided into scenes for smaller groups or pairs of learners to work on. The number of stars on the posters indicates the number of lines each actor wants.

The English lessons are now dedicated to writing the lines for each scene, and interpreting the plot of the whole story and the characters that people have described. The pupils use dictionaries and other resource books to help them with the writing task. After a period of intense hard work, the scenes are presented and commented on by the rest of the class. They are then rewritten as necessary and copies are made for everyone. The next step is for pupils to practise their lines and rehearse the play, before they finally present it to an audience made up of other English classes and parents, always with great success.

The activity always turns out successfully because of the way it is organized following the kinds of criteria described. The fact that learners have different attitudes to the activity can be a problem, but all the participants are aware of this potential problem from the beginning and so can make sure it is dealt with appropriately throughout. Everyone has a lot to contribute to the common project, and everyone in turn is expected to get the support needed to fulfil his or her obligations. As a result of this whole-class activity, more pupils tend to opt for "making plays" when given the choice. Those who were initially reluctant usually feel a lot more confident, having benefited from this good experience with the whole class.

Pen pals – using the written language authentically

Another activity which has always been very important in the foreign language classroom at Karlsunde Skole is making contact with other learners in different parts of the world. The activity is important because it emphasizes one of the main reasons for learning a foreign language – that is, to get in contact with people through the new language, and learn about them and about oneself too. I have had different kinds of projects with my classes. Some involved long-term contacts over several years, while other contacts were much briefer, perhaps lasting for just one project. Both types of contact are important. At the moment, my English class has started a project involving contact with a class from Russia and one from New Zealand. The participants have established the following contract for the first 6-month period of the project:

- A snail-mail presentation of the participants and their backgrounds: schools, families, towns, countries, etc.

- A weekly e-mail contact about whatever the learners are interested in: small events in the school, headlines in the newspapers, holidays, etc. In pairs, learners take it in turns to be in charge of the weekly letter, writing it on behalf of the class.
- A project about Christmas traditions. Each class prepares a presentation of typical Christmas traditions and sends it on no later than December 11.

The project is based on class-to-class contact. The learners do not have individual penpals as they can easily get them elsewhere if they want to. Pupils in all three classes make suggestions for the content of the project, which is then eventually decided on by the teachers. The teachers also set up a strict time schedule which participants must all respect in order to avoid disappointment. It is, of course, a wonderful experience to send and receive letters. The process strongly underlines the WE, and makes the world seem smaller. Writing in (which is one way of learning) the foreign language takes on a new dimension which is essential. Moreover, the project brings home to the pupils the distinction between writing for purposes of authentic communication and writing for practice. They now realize the need for accuracy, and readily make use of spell-checkers and dictionaries.

Project work

The last activity I would like to describe is another one that has recurred over the years in our school. Learners beginning a new language delve into a topic of interest to them, get to grips with what it is all about, and present their findings to their peers in order to stimulate their curiosity to find out more. These presentations often lead on to new initiatives in the classroom. The whole class will read an article or other source of information about a topic, and discuss among themselves how important the topic is. Later on, the projects will change: the questions now are not only "What?" but also "Why?". In other words, once pupils have understood the basics of their topic, they must ask themselves questions like: Why is it like this? Does it necessarily have to be like this? What do I think about it? What can I do about it, now and later?

Here is a list of topics that learners have engaged in individually and in pairs, as part of project work on "Aspects of the US":

- the Civil War
- John F. Kennedy
- the Vietnam War

- Black and White
- ghettos
- schools
- Hollywood
- Watergate
- settlers and Indians
- Basketball
- American families
- Martin Luther King
- the Ku-Klux-Klan

Apart from introducing project work to the pupils, my role is to suggest what other aspects should be covered in order to build a broad and balanced picture of the US. The agenda for the lessons would look like this:

1 "Typical American". Input from the teacher or the learners on different aspects not covered by the projects: literature, art, history, geography, politics, economics, etc.
2 Pair/individual work with projects: What? Why?
3 Comments on ...
4 Presentation of .... (input from projects – and often points of departure for the "Typical American" input). Homework (agreed upon in pairs), e.g., to read some material, look things up in an encyclopaedia, go to the library, ask someone for information.

Conclusion

Stressing learner initiatives in the way I have described here means that the content of the teaching-learning process inevitably turns out differently in different classes. Of course, the national curriculum and guidelines provide a certain framework, but the what, why and how are still genuine open questions that can be discussed and decided upon in cooperation. Such an approach makes the learning process much more dynamic and unpredictable, and also very personal. My learners and I would never do without it.

Between a rock and a hard place: the interdependent classroom*

Russell Whitehead

Introduction

Traditionally, the classroom has been the place where language learning took place, and the teacher *the* access to the target language. However, various developments have altered the situation. Widespread interest in the idea of independence in learning; an increasingly work-related and focused motivation among learners; an explosion in media availability; the exponential growth of the Internet for interactive transglobal communication; the provision of self-access centres – these factors have, in various ways, dramatically shifted the place or roles of the classroom, teacher and student.

It is only natural that attention should be directed at new things, and of course new developments and possibilities rightly demand research and experimentation. Nevertheless, the classroom remains a vital issue. Many learners now learn independently, with individual advisers. They access a plethora of media. They learn virtually. This means that when they *do* come together in physical classrooms, it is all the more important that we should engage with the idea of the group, the social presence, the interaction – the in*ter*dependence. And for many people in the world, it remains the only place for language learning. Better processes in real classrooms will help to inform our structuring of, and response to, virtual classes.

This means that we must continue to address the issue of context: the contextual nature of the target language and the mediating classroom language, and the learning environment and social interrelations of the class. In other words, *language in use* should be a real and vital phrase, not the sterile title of test papers or exercise books. Who understands what from whom and how? If something isn't strange, we think it's normal – we tend not to think about it. But what teachers think is normal may be extremely strange for students, and if there are no systems in place for this meaning to be negotiated, strange will come to mean alienating. All learning happens in relation to other learning; new learning may reshape previous learning or, more likely, be shaped by it. As far as students are concerned, teaching, whatever teachers think, happens in relation to their previous learning.

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* A shorter version of this article appeared in the IATEFL Independence Special Interest Group newsletter, summer 1998 issue.

Language

Drilling "This is a pencil/book/etc." is focussing on items which are unlikely ever to be used as such. It is not something we say in our normal lives. But I did hear someone say "This is us" recently. The context was a bus journey and the meaning was "let's stand up and get off the bus here because it's the right stop for where we want to go". "Are you 2 o'clock?", said in a staff room at 1.55 p.m. next to the photocopier, meant "does your class start at 2 p.m., because if it does, then your need (which I'm interpreting from the tension in your facial expression and body language) is more urgent than mine, and you are welcome to go ahead of me to do your copying". Pragmatically and socially, four little words were doing a lot to service a relationship. It is in this area of the sheer vtality of words that the classroom will always have a greater power than the CD-ROM, for example.

Use

As well as considering context for presentations of language items and so on, we should also be thinking about the environment or community in which the learning is taking place. The students need to be involved, incorporated, in the process – to be engaged. As Ursula Le Guin says in *The Left Hand of Darkness*: "To learn which questions are unanswerable, and *not to answer them*: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness." It is of course terribly difficult for teachers to shut up, but an example of the benefits of doing so is the following.

S1 to T: "Russell, what an actor do?"
T to S1: "Act, or perform."
S1 to S2: "Yes, you see – act is a verb."

Of course I had an urge to correct the question form; but I also told myself that that was at that moment an unanswerable question. As it turned out, I was glad I didn't, since S1 and S2 weren't at all interested in question forms, just whether they could use *act* in a certain way. Teachers and learners need to be working together on a shared and overt agenda, so that what goes on is mutually understood – as far as possible.

Building interdependence

Language is a system, learning is a system. Systems consist of interrelated, interdependent processes. Bad processes are likely to create bad systems. You can't impose new systems from above; you have to develop different processes in order to build a new system. The processes that follow are not a fixed recipe, but suggestions for the kinds of thing that may be used as a block or from time to time to develop or maintain a proactive context for language learning – or teacher training.

Activities to build group dynamics

It is crucial to start with people, as users of language, not simply language. The development of the students' language – or the trainees' teaching – is a development of themselves, and the two should not be divorced. There is a lot of material around on building groups and everyone will have their favourites; I use memory games. Dictate a list of 20–30 words (at random, or according to some set you wish to revise); when you finish, ask everyone to write down as many as they can remember; they will run out of steam quite soon; getting into pairs will give them a few more; groups more again; finally, somehow in the whole class, the complete list can be recreated. Along the way, they will naturally discuss memorization techniques, meanings, and so on. They will not ask you for the "answer" – once you have set the task, it belongs to the class, and they will solve it themselves. It should serve to show that interdependence is stronger than independence.

Negotiation of overall aim

Individuals write one sentence to express why they are learning the language – or training, or whatever. These will no doubt vary widely, from: "I need to pass the test at the end" to "My boss told me to" to "I don't care" to "I want to read Shakespeare" to "I want to be able to travel and communicate". Next, they move into pairs and combine their two sentences into one to which they are both happy to subscribe.

Then pairs of pairs combine, and so on, up to the whole class, with compromise and expansion all along. The final sentence can be displayed on the wall, or written on the covers of notebooks: a mission statement. The result should be more powerful than any individual autonomous aim. This can be done in any language. In the target language it is of course a useful multi-skills exercise in its own right. If you have a work-orientated group, they will no doubt see the business logic of it – no enterprise succeeds without a good plan. Students record this overall aim on the front of their notebook, so that everything that happens can be seen in relation to it, to the group-created context for the learning, a sort of constant answer to the question, "What's the point?". If you are running the kind of course that people leave and join along the way, new members can be inducted to this group aim, and after a few days or weeks invited to participate in a review of it.

Identifying barriers

What's stopping success at the moment? Discussions bring out points as diverse as: not enough opportunities for practice, shyness, lack of knowledge, time, materials, stupidity, impatience ...

Personalizing through metaphor

Metaphor is useful, providing a way of thinking about learning which is personal and creative and may enable us to sidestep received notions of learning which are embedded in existing metalanguage. Students write down what animal they are when they are at home in their room, eating with their family, engaged in their favourite activity, sleeping, with their friends, and, finally, learning English (with teachers, also ask when teaching). Rich discussions can evolve from explaining why they are a monkey, parrot, tiger, fish, etc., when learning English. I remember one rather timid student saying she was a monkey because she just copied people but wasn't a real English speaker. But another student suggested she view a monkey as a strong animal – agile, intelligent, very capable, leaping through the jungle. Seeing through the constraints of our self-representations is very useful to the learning process. Otherwise we are stuck with statements like "English is very difficult" – a seemingly good excuse for not doing well, but a strange logic (unless British children, for example, show greater innate intelligence by mastering this difficult language rather than something easy like Swiss German or Swahili).

Reflection on previous learning

Everyone notes down things they are good at which they have learnt. Lists will include sports, driving, cooking, forming friendships, being a parent, playing music ... How did we get to be good? Overall features or characteristics of successful learning are displayed round the room. The synthesis involves a teacher to start with, a lot of self-practice, a strong sense of the usefulness of the activity, an enjoyment of the process, pride, and either pleasant sociability or peaceful solitude. It doesn't take long to realize that it's possible to transfer most of this to learning languages.

Formulation of solutions

With all this in mind, solutions can be proposed – however fantastical they may seem at this stage – like spend twenty minutes a day on a grammar point, listen to songs in English, meet more people, get penfriends (e-mail?), review timetables. If you are doing teacher training, teachers might decide to get together and teach each other languages they know, set up peer observations, reading groups, and so on.

Allocation of responsibilities

If that's *what*, next is *where* and *when*: it is important to allocate responsibility. Some things can be done outside school, some as homework (perhaps in groups), others in class. This clarifies the context of the class, seeing the limits of what it can achieve. Expectations should be realistic. External factors – exam syllabus, national curriculum, etc. – can be brought in, and responsibility shared.

Negotiation of first phase plan

A strong and conscious group of people, who know their strengths and needs and where they want to get to and how they have achieved success in the past, now take some risks together, and form a plan for the first lesson, or week, or term. The point is the *process* of making it and reviewing it. The next one will be better. "Best" is a dirty word, suggesting there's no more to do. The first plan will consist of extracting the most urgent and most addressable barriers/needs from above, and translating them into aims. Often, or usually, we do this without consulting the students.

Execution of first phase plan

Follow your first plan together. Stick to it, even when you feel it's not working perfectly, because you have to share the responsibility for your negotiations.

Evaluation and reflection
It is crucial to evaluate and reflect on the learning, and the plan, negotiating improvements for the next phase. The idea of "good/bad" teaching needs to be put aside, and replaced by active understanding of "(un)productive" processes operated by everyone.

The characteristics of such an approach are that it's collective and student-driven. It acknowledges that it's a system consisting of interdependent processes evolving among an interdependent group of people, who share its ownership.

Conclusion

Lecturer, teacher, tutor, facilitator, adviser: many terms are used. I hope we are now at the consultancy stage, one of mutual respect. A good business consultant goes into a client's business with an open mind, not to "fix", but to work in partnership and build strategies for improvement. I like to think of teachers in this light. They do not tell – telling never created learning – but they have seen a lot of learning work and not work. The current obsession with autonomy and independence shrouds a lot of ongoing teacher-centredness, with learner-training being the new way of telling learners how to do what they may or may not want. Self-access is a fashionable way of spending heavily on resources in order to facilitate what university students have always done anyway – get on with it. If we are not just to head blindly to an extreme of selfish individualism which will open the way for an inevitable swing back in the other direction, we need to hold together the desirable strands of various aspects of teaching and learning. We need to do what good teachers, good doctors, good consultants have always done: to make ourselves redundant (because we've achieved the help that was needed from us) as quickly and enjoyably as possible.

Interdependence can help independence*

Marion Geddes

Introduction

The term "learner independence" is often associated with the idea of learners working on their own. As teachers our role is to help individual learners to make best use of their personal learning strategies, develop their own individual potential, take responsibility for their own learning. In our concern for the individual it is easy to lose sight of the role that the group can play in helping the individuals that make up that group to become more independent. On the path to becoming more independent, the group can help students to be interdependent.

For the last six years I have been running two-week English language immersion courses for adult students at Project Scotland. These courses are run on principles of learner independence and learners work on their own, using appropriate materials and techniques. On all courses I have found it fascinating to observe the role that the group plays in helping each individual learner to become more independent.

In this paper I will describe some principles of learner independence that guide me in the running of English language immersion courses. I will then offer some observations from a recent course which illustrate these same principles being realized through interchange amongst members of the group. These observations are examples of interdependence helping the development of individual learners' independence.

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* This paper is based on two earlier papers: "Interdependence can help independence", by Marion Geddes and Dagmar Baker, *English Language Teaching News*, October 1997, published by The British Council and Teachers of English in Austria; and "Learner independence as an alternative to classroom-based courses", by Marion Geddes, *Independence* (IATEFL LI SIG Newsletter) 18, Winter 1996/7.

Immersion courses at Project Scotland

Like many other teachers of adults I had been finding myself becoming increasingly dissatisfied with classroom teaching and the inefficiency of dealing with a group of people as though they all shared more or less the same wants and needs. As I myself would not wish to learn a foreign language in a classroom, I asked myself how I could subject others to it. This is not to say that I wanted to abandon the classroom altogether – or rather the group. But I wanted a very different kind of classroom and group, and different types of interaction between the group members. I decided to take the plunge and set up my own language centre, Project Scotland, where I would promote learner independence in groups but away from traditional classrooms.

On my English language immersion courses students live and study in my home. This is in the village of Duror, near Fort William in the West Highlands of Scotland. Courses usually run for two weeks, seven days a week, and students are immersed in English during all waking hours. Each group has a maximum of eight students, at different language levels, and aged between about twenty and seventy-plus. There is no fixed timetable, no set number of study hours, no formal classes. With only eight students I can make decisions about group activities such as walks and excursions at short notice, perhaps after watching the weather forecast on TV. The students are free to study when they want. Some may be "early birds" and start the day by listening to something on a walkman in bed before getting up. The "late-night birds" can burn the midnight oil. Some students work sitting at a table in the Study Room, others prefer lying on a sofa in the conservatory, or rocking gently on the swing in the woods.

Here is a list of some of the principles that guide me in my course planning and in the way I work with my students. My overall aims are to help them become increasingly independent learners while improving aspects of their command of English:

1. *Aims: learners should articulate their aims, short-term as well as long-term.*

In any group of eight, the students are bound to be at different language levels and sometimes span a wide age range. They have different, albeit often overlapping, aims. On the first day of a course I get each student to try to make explicit their short-term aims. Some of this is done with the whole group present, so that students can find out more about each other.

2. *Resources: for aims to be realistic, learners need to know what resources are available to them.*

At Project Scotland the resources include not just books and cassettes, but also people in the house and people living in the community. With each student I draw a kind of "mind map" that describes their initial programme of study, linking aims with resources and activities.

3. *Self-confidence: learners need to have self-confidence and a good self-image.*

At the beginning of a Project Scotland course some students, particularly those at lower language levels, can feel overwhelmed. They are suddenly living in a totally English-speaking environment, and they are having to make decisions for themselves about what and how best to study. Obviously I provide guidance and help, but for the students it is nonetheless a very different learning situation from any that they have previously experienced.

4. *Linguistic challenges: learners should actively seek challenges. They shouldn't always play safe and work only with material they feel confident about.*

As teachers we are probably all familiar with the research that describes the good language learner as a risk-taker. One of my roles is to help students to become risk-takers, to encourage them to accept challenges. For example, I may want them to realize that they can experience success and pleasure reading without reference to a dictionary; that they do have enough English to relate something interesting about their country to other students; that they are able to sustain an interesting and enjoyable conversation when invited to the homes of my friends in the village. Risk-taking is obviously closely related to questions of self-confidence (see 3 above).

5. *Learner training: learners should learn about some new learning techniques and know something about the nature of language learning.*

On a short two-week course I find that a programme of learner training activities is too time-consuming. Students are impatient to get their teeth into language learning rather than learning about learning. However, I do suggest a few techniques when I realize they are new to particular students. For example, I encourage them to carry paper and pen on them at all times. I encourage the use of vocabulary cards (rectangles of paper) on which students note down a new word or phrase on one side, and write or draw a test question (which could simply be a picture) on the other side, to help later review. With individual students and small groups I find it very useful to discuss some of the things about language learning that have helped to inform my own teaching and learning, for example, the usefulness of vivid associations to aid memory; reading skills; fluency-accuracy; aspects of a communicative approach versus a grammar-translation approach; and much more.

6. *Planning and self-discipline: learners should learn to plan their study and appreciate the importance of self-discipline.*

Every student at Project Scotland has to complete a Daily Record. This is a set of A4 pages, one for each day of the course. As well as noting down what they have studied that day, and all other learning experiences they have been part of (for example, listening to or taking part in a conversation at lunch, spoken encounters in the village), they have to look forward and note down their plans for the following day(s).

7. *Looking beyond the course: learners should learn study skills and techniques that are useful now and will be useful when they are learning on their own, without the support of a teacher.*

When guiding students in their choice of materials and study techniques I am obviously concerned with their present needs and the immediate appropriacy of materials and tasks. However, I also want students to look beyond the course. I have created no special self-access materials, and instead prefer to encourage the use of activities and materials that the students can find and use at home, alone without a teacher or facilitator. It is a salutary lesson for any teacher interested in independent learning to observe the delight that students can experience when they find a grammar book with an answer key or listening materials that have answers and transcripts "hidden" in the teacher's book. Some other activities I encourage are reading simplified readers quickly and for pleasure, including readers linked to video films; vocabulary cards; talking to oneself aloud in English; conversation groups; shadow reading (reading a text aloud from a transcript at the same time as a voice on a tape) with audio books or any text that has an accompanying cassette; actively using newly learned language; deliberately planning something to talk about at mealtimes or coffee breaks. All these are activities that can be continued at home by students on their own.

8. *Evaluation: learners should learn to review the work they have done and evaluate their progress.*

In the traditional classroom there is usually a textbook that helps students to feel they are making progress, by the simple fact of moving steadily from (say) Unit 1 to Unit 10 over two weeks. In an independent learning context other means have to be found. I try to encourage my students to evaluate their progress in various ways. At the end of Week 1 I may ask students to redraw or amend the map of aims drawn at the beginning of the course. This helps them realize how far they have come in achieving their aims. Looking back at what they have written in their Daily Record also helps this retrospective evaluation – comparing their performance now with a particular point in the past. In the Daily Record they also have to note down two things they did particularly well that day, such as their success in making a contribution to the conversation; new vocabulary that they were able to slip into a conversation or a piece of writing; a conviction that at last they understand the present perfect after doing a lot of exercises on it. Another opportunity for reviewing their progress comes when students repeat the same type of activity or take part in similar events (for example, talking with the same person) at different points in the course. They have points for comparison, past and present.

Interdependence

What role does the group play in all this? Below are some examples of interactions within the group that I observed on a recent course. (As the students are with each other all the time I am certain there are many more similar interactions continually taking place.) I have related each observation (or group of observations) to the principles that I have elaborated above.

1. *Aims*

"He has explained very well what I want to do too. Only I also want to ..." This student learned the value of articulating her aims more precisely and realistically after listening to others articulating theirs.

2. *Resources*

"Can you explain?" Students realized that the teacher wasn't the only person they could ask for help. Sometimes the question was addressed to a student who had just studied the matter; at other times it was asked of a more advanced student.

"You keep on talking about it. Which book were you reading?" Students discussed and recommended materials to each other.

"That's just what I wanted to say." A student read and copied a short section about a mountain walk from the diary of another student. She knew that the passage had been checked by the teacher, and felt it incorporated the same vocabulary and prepositions that she too had learned during the walk.

3. *Self-confidence*

"I understand why you feel a bit depressed on the first day." Here a confident, advanced student was able to offer valuable psychological support to another student, empathizing in a way that is not possible for a teacher.

"We want to hear part two of the story." At mealtimes individual students were often encouraged by the group to talk about something interesting they had just read or listened to. For instance, we all enjoyed listening to a three-part summary of the simplified reader *Kidnapped*, with an appropriate cliff-hanger to make us look forward to the next meal!

"I'm not so bad at English after all!" When a lower level student is able to explain something to a more advanced student, this is a tremendous confidence booster.

4. *Linguistic challenges*

"I know perfectly well what it means but it's difficult to explain." One student asked another for an explanation. The second student was unwittingly encouraged by the first to use language in new ways. This situation may also be a test of whether the student has fully understood the point they are explaining.

"Tell us about it." In a coffee break the group encouraged a linguistically weak member to tell them about the talk she had been listening to on a cassette. Throughout her rather halting account they listened attentively and encouragingly.

5. *Learner training*

"Do you mind if I correct you?" Two students found it interesting to learn to judge when to intervene and help other students. Noticing fellow students' mistakes or linguistic shortcomings is also a good exercise in language awareness.

6. *Planning and self-discipline*

"Come on, let's go and do some study!" Students often encouraged each other in this way.

"What shall we do first? Go for a walk or do some study?" They also often planned together when to study.

7. *Looking beyond the course*

"I want to see how you learn." "It looks fun. I'll give it a try." Students watched others using an unfamiliar technique and wanted to learn what they were doing. For example, one student made vocabulary "testing" cards for herself. Another started using colours and a few pictures and diagrams in her vocabulary notebook. Other students were soon trying these techniques for themselves.

8. *Evaluation*

"Remember how you were at the beginning of the course – now your English has improved so much! You should be proud!" On the second last day of the course an advanced student was encouraging two lower level students to evaluate themselves.

In conclusion

Is Project Scotland a special case? Yes and no. I believe that the principles I have outlined can be applied to any learning or teaching situation. The implementation may look very different, but this is only superficial; the guiding principles remain the same. Likewise, observations of interdependence similar to the ones I have described can be made in most classrooms. If they are made, then there is probably a good deal of in(ter)dependent learning going on in that classroom – perhaps more than the teacher realizes. We need to become more aware of how and what our students can learn from each other – of the group's role in promoting learner independence. We will then be better able to encourage it and create opportunities for it. And, to repeat one of the slogans of this conference, in the process we will help ourselves "let go".

Changing attitudes towards treatment of mistakes

Leslie Bobb Wolff

The objective of this article is to examine teachers' and students' attitudes towards the treatment of mistakes, and to discuss how these attitudes can influence the degree of autonomy learners develop in their learning process. I would like to look at why and how teachers' and students' attitudes towards the way mistakes are handled need to and can be changed in order for students to become more autonomous. I will look in more detail at the different possible moments of student intervention within the writing process, in order to see how students can participate in the correction of written work, and to identify steps that they can take to achieve greater responsibility once the work has been corrected. I would like to reflect on how getting students to work with mistakes at these different moments of intervention can lead them to become more autonomous in their learning process, even in a relatively traditional classroom setting.

The work described in this article has been developed within the context of the Spanish state school system, mostly at secondary and tertiary levels. Classes are relatively large, running from 30–35 students in secondary school and to even greater numbers at university level. Teachers mostly still work in a relatively traditional way, still strongly influenced by behaviourist methodologies. Students are accustomed to teacher fronted and controlled classes.

Mistake here is used as a generic term to refer to any possibility for improvement which will cause the written work to conform more fully to the rules of standard L2 and to be more easily understood. Depending on the students' L2 level and their age, the term can cover everything from spelling and grammar to coherence, cohesion, vocabulary improvement, etc.

Changing attitudes towards treatment of mistakes

Teachers' attitudes

Teachers' attitudes towards how mistakes should be handled have, in theory at least, changed over the last few decades. For at least the past twenty or thirty years, theorists in both communicative and humanistic approaches have encouraged teachers to see mistakes in a different light (e.g., Johnson 1988). We need to see that learners' mistakes reveal, at least to some extent, their understanding of the target language at that moment. As Ridley (1997, p.55) points out, "Learners develop intuitions about the language and we can say that errors are often manifestations of these intuitions".

But attitudes die hard and it is difficult for a teacher to accept that she may not necessarily be the best person to mark what is correct and what is not. Those of us who were taught as students and/or trained as teachers according to a behaviourist methodology had drilled into us the doctrine that mistakes should be corrected immediately for fear that if this was not done, they would become engraved on our students' minds forever.

In a traditional setting, the teacher assigns written work, the student works on it alone, and hands it in. The teacher corrects this work and returns it to the student, most likely covered with red marks and comments. The reaction of the student is, in most cases, to put the paper away without looking at it closely, and hope to do better next time. This is what I remember happening to me as a student; it is the way I worked as a beginning teacher; and it is what my undergraduate methodology students still state has mostly been their experience as students. However, if we want students to take responsibility for their own learning process, it is necessary to get them involved in their writing progress and in developing criteria to improve their own written work.

What I am advocating here is that students should become involved in the correction of written work from the beginning. I have found that students can begin helping one another, through co-correction and co-assessment of their written work, and that this leads on to self-correction and self-assessment of their work.

Students' attitudes

> [There are] two domains of learning which are probably characteristic of non-reflective learners and, significantly, amenable to change and improvement. [One] is the learners' ability to understand how the target language system is structured and how it works. (Ridley 1997, p.52)
>
> The learners will have to be helped to develop their own criteria of correct-

> ness, and therefore the time spent correcting will have been well spent. (Bowen and Marks 1994, p.55)

I have put these two quotations together because they reflect my own experience with students concerning their attitudes towards how they work with their own mistakes. Based on my observations, and on my students' reported reactions when written work is returned to them covered with the teacher's comments, it is clear that few students are prepared or willing to try, on their own, to use their written mistakes as a vehicle for learning how the L2 system works. This, then, is when the teacher must find ways of helping students to develop criteria for uncovering how the language works. Students must be led to realize that they need not be entirely dependent on their teacher to improve their ability to communicate in the L2, and that they are capable of taking on a good deal of responsibility for their own improvement.

Possible moments of intervention in written work

What I have been working on with my methodology students is determining the different moments in which student intervention is possible and identifying the kinds of intervention that are possible. The suggestions included here are partly from students, partly from other teachers and partly my own. The moments of intervention commented on are the following: (i) before students begin to write; (ii) while students are writing; (iii) during rewriting before written work is seen by the teacher; (iv) while the work is in the teacher's hands; (v) when returning the papers to the students. At each of these points, students can be helped to take on responsibility for improving their written work.

(i) Before beginning to write

The first possible moment of intervention is before the students even begin to write. Topics, relevant grammar, vocabulary, etc. can be brainstormed with the whole class and written on the blackboard. In addition, students can be given a model paper which can then be gone through with them. I have found a combination of these two approaches to work well with low-intermediate students writing, for example, about themselves. We look at a couple of model papers referring specifically to the topics or areas covered (e.g., family, hobbies), the students think about what they wish to write, and air any doubts they have before beginning to write.

One decision that needs to made before students begin is whether the writing task is to be conducted individually or collaboratively. As the following discussion under (ii) shows, whether students work individually or in groups influences the outcome of their work as well as the learning process during the writing task.

(ii) While writing

If students are working in pairs or small groups, they can work collectively to produce one paper per group. The negotiation which takes place among the students while they are writing tends to lead to fewer mistakes in what they produce together. Allowing students to consult one another about questions which arise while they are writing can also lead to better work. Students do need to be asked about their preferred working methods. Some, in my experience, prefer writing alone, and others prefer writing in pairs or small groups. Having students work together or consult one another while writing is an indirect way of communicating to them that they need not be entirely dependent on their teacher for help with any doubts they may have.

(iii) Rewriting before written work is seen by the teacher

Before the teacher looks at written work, students can be asked to check one another's papers in pairs or small groups. This can be done with or without a guiding questionnaire. They can also do this for their own work, although my experience is that this is more difficult for students at first. Little (1991, p.55) also points this out, commenting that getting learners to correct and edit one another's work can be beneficial since it is easier to detect another person's mistakes than one's own. Pohl (1997, pp.6f.) and O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996, pp.150, 157f.) offer model questionnaires for peer and self-assessment of written work at different levels of proficiency. A colleague at primary school is presently experimenting with the use of a guiding questionnaire for 9- to 11-year-old beginning students writing stories.

Once students have gone over one another's papers, they can be asked to write a new draft of their own paper, based on the comments and suggestions given. Having reference to such comments seems a necessary aid for the development of self-improvement skills in writing.This seems logical, since we write to the best of our ability and so find it difficult on our own to see where the flaws are.

Wood (1993, p.38), Qiyi (1993, p.30) and Lewitt (1990, pp.2ff.) describe different techniques for the process of rewriting combined with peer correction. Wood observes that getting students to correct their own errors makes writing more of a learning activity, provides students with the opportunity of learning from their mistakes and helps them to gain confidence in their ability to write. One of the benefits she suggests is that self-correction and re-writing help to wean students from dependency on the teacher for correction. Another is that by taking on more responsibility for correcting their work, students develop a sense of self-sufficiency. A third is that students become more active participants in their own learning and in helping classmates to learn.

(iv) Work in the teacher's hands

Once the work is in the teacher's hands, there are various possible courses of action. The one which seems to be least useful is that of writing in the correction. My own experience is that if the teacher writes in the correct answers, most students tend not to look over their paper very much at all. This means, on the one hand, that little learning takes place on the part of the student, and on the other, that there is frustration on the part of the teacher who has put in a good deal of time going over the student's work.

There are instances when I believe that the most appropriate teacher response is to ignore mistakes entirely. This depends, of course, on the purpose of the written work. For example, for some types of student journals, correcting grammar and vocabulary errors, etc. can be felt as intrusive. In written work of this nature, writing comments to the students on the content, and simply ignoring mistakes may be the best response. I have found that asking students to note in advance which they would prefer can also be helpful, since there are some who want to have mistakes pointed out to them. Similarly, in relation to comments students write about the lesson, it seems inappropriate to correct any linguistic errors. The correctness of their written expression is not what is important here, but rather their opinions of what has happened in the lesson. If students are concerned that their written comments can be used as a means of assessing their writing performance, they may be afraid to express complex ideas because they are unsure of the language.

For written work that does have accuracy in expression as an objective, the teacher can mark where a mistake is in a sentence. This can be done with symbols (e.g. w.o., V, AV, sp.) although my experience here is that the set of symbols should be kept simple, since otherwise it gets confusing for me and for my students. I know other teachers who do develop a complex set of correction symbols with success, so it may depend on the individual teacher to find out what works best for her or him and the specific group of students.

For written work composed of individual sentences, I have found that simply putting a mark in front of each sentence that has a mistake works quite well. An alternative approach which I have taken is to write a new paper myself collecting the most commonly repeated mistakes from different students' papers and to use this as a handout or overhead transparency. Over and over again, students of mine have added that an important point for them is for the teacher to avoid using a red-coloured marker.

(v) On returning papers to students

My experience is that when papers are returned to students with only some symbols indicating where there are mistakes, students are avid to discover what these mistakes are and tend to turn to one another immediately to work out how to correct them. Elsewhere (Bobb Wolff 1990) I have described an approach I have used of getting students to try to correct their mistakes in small groups. They then write on the board any mistakes they are unsure about and these can be examined with the whole class.

The teacher can make general comments on mistakes to the whole class, either before returning the papers or once students have had the chance to look through their own. If the teacher has prepared an exercise containing a compilation of the mistakes made by students, this can be used before the papers are returned.

Another approach I have observed with smaller classes is to create the opportunity of giving individual feedback to students about their mistakes by assigning some work to the class as a whole and meeting with the students one by one during this period. This approach is also possible in those cases where papers have been written in pairs or small groups.

What is done after mistakes have been corrected?

This, for me, is a key moment. Correcting a mistake in a piece of written work is one thing. Another quite different matter is to be able to transfer this correction to the student's overall sense of the language. Activities must be found which will help students to move beyond simply identifying and correcting mistakes. Little (1991, p.55) suggests that "when they have completed a piece of written work, it can be useful for learners to consider the errors they have made and ask themselves why they made them".

One tool I have found useful is that provided by Edge (1989, pp.9ff.); he divides mistakes into the categories of slips, errors and attempts. Described briefly, slips are those mistakes which students can identify in their own paper as soon as they have been indicated. Errors are those mistakes which need some work, more exercises but no further teacher explanation. Attempts are those areas that students have not yet studied. What I have found useful is to explain these three definitions to the students, taking as examples mistakes of theirs which I think fall into each of these categories. This, then, is a tool for students to use individually. Each one classifies his or her own mistakes into the three categories. For me what is important here is that it is the individual student who does the classifying. I think that it is the student who knows better than anyone else how each of his or her mistakes should be categorized. Here too is a way of showing students indirectly that they can take control of their mistakes, and that by analysing their mistakes they can make decisions about what should be done next. This is an important key to helping students to take responsibility for their learning process and to become more independent of their teacher and of others.

Another advantage of this individual classification system is that it is particularly suited to the kinds of multi-level classes that we always work with, where each student has his or her own pattern of mistakes. By classifying their mistakes themselves students now have a tool for deciding what to do next, since each category receives a different treatment.

Slips are listed on a "slip" page and kept in the student's notebook, to be referred to in the future as a kind of checklist. Students are asked (and reminded) to refer to this page and use it to review any piece of written work before submitting the work to the teacher or a classmate.

Mistakes which have been classified as errors are worked on by students in small groups. Students first compare individual lists and decide which errors are most repeated. Then they prepare new exercises or sentences for new exercises which incorporate these mistakes. If they are preparing isolated sentences, I collect a copy of these from each small group and use it to prepare a new exercise for the class.

Anything put into the attempt category is given to the teacher who can use this as a reference for future work. I have found that more advanced students have difficulty differentiating between their errors and attempts. They tend to combine these two categories together and work on preparing practice exercises, and also consult grammar books for further reference. The importance of classifying mistakes is not that the categorization is necessarily "correct" but, rather, that it is requiring the students to analyse their own work carefully.

The usefulness of categorizing mistakes in this way is that from this point on, the students can continue to work, either on their own or with classmates, on the improvement of their L2. They no longer feel totally dependent on their teacher for direction. This leads to an important change in attitude for both teachers and students as they realize that students can work on improving their L2 themselves. With time, of course, another benefit of this individualized approach is that students become more aware of their own progress when they see mistakes once classified as errors move up into the category of slips and so on.

Students can also be asked to self-assess their work once the previous steps have been accomplished, to think about how they can improve future work, and even to specify steps they will take when doing further writing tasks. I have also worked with teachers who, at this point, ask their students to give themselves a mark for the written work. For students who are heavily influenced by a grading system (which is, at least in Spain, the case of most students in the state school system), grading their own work helps them to take this self-assessment more seriously.

Why change attitudes?

Teachers often voice fears that if they allow students to correct their own work, some mistakes will not be corrected and some may even be miscorrected. This is certainly a possibility, even a probability. However, I think we need to ask ourselves if it is necessary that every piece of written work be one hundred percent correct before we leave it. This obviously depends on the students' level and on the objectives of the class in question. However, I would suggest that in most cases it is not necessary for all mistakes to be corrected. Furthermore, the fact that students learn from correcting their mistakes and that this leads them to reflect on how the language works, seems to me to be more important than the possibility of some mistakes going uncorrected.

By including students at each moment of intervention we are helping them to take responsibility for their learning process. As I have stated previously, I believe that students need to acquire tools which will help them to improve their work on their own, if they are expected to become more autonomous and less dependent on their teacher. Through using these tools and realizing that they are capable of improving their writing skills, students and teachers can change their attitudes towards the learner's ability to improve without constant feedback from the teacher. This change in attitude is necessary in order for students to become more autonomous in their learning process.

As Allwright pointed out some years ago (1981, p.11), if learners are not trained to identify and repair their mistakes, teachers run the risk of falling into a pattern where they simply supply the correct answer without getting the learner to think again. He adds that as learners develop their own criteria for correctness and appropriateness, this leads to a direct improvement in their language learning. I would add that it also leads to the development of greater learner autonomy.

My experience is that the teacher's attitude towards and handling of student mistakes play an important role in leading students to realize that they need not be as dependent on teacher correction as they once believed, and allowing them space in which they can become more autonomous. The way mistakes are handled, by whom and when, can help to change both teachers' and students' conceptions of the classroom from a place in which the teacher has all the power of decision to a more autonomous learning environment in which responsibility is shared.

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Part III

Investigating learners and learning

The four papers in this part of the book report on empirical research projects carried out in third-level institutions in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Finland and Mexico. They are all concerned with the interaction between affective and metacognitive aspects of learning. Jane Nolan reports on a systematic attempt to determine which activities were most likely to increase first-year students' language learning awareness at a teacher training institution in the Czech Republic. Using a combination of questionnaires and learners' diaries, she is able to plot the changes that took place in her students' beliefs, attitudes and learning behaviour during and after their course – the majority made significant progress towards greater autonomy. She also considers the effectiveness of "private" and "public" procedures for developing reflection and language learning awareness, finding that both types have a useful contribution to make.

Jennifer Ridley's paper is the one contribution to the book that did not begin life as a presentation at the Kraków conference. It is concerned with some of the difficulties facing university teachers who want to promote the development of autonomy in learners who seem to find it difficult to take responsibility for their own learning. The paper reports on an experiment carried out with a group of students learning French in a degree course in Business Studies and French at Trinity College Dublin. The purpose of the experiment was to encourage the students to adopt a more reflective stance towards their language learning. Jennifer Ridley's findings show that helping experienced language learners to become more autonomous is likely to be a complex and surprisingly protracted process.

Felicity Kjisik and Joan Nordlund also focus on language learners' reflective abilities, arguing that their growth depends on a gradual increase in the individual learner's awareness of self and of his or her world view. They give examples of techniques they use with students who take the autonomous language learning modules provided by Helsinki University Language Centre – analysis of language learning strategies and language learning needs, learning contracts, learner counselling, learning logs, self-evaluation; and they present evidence of the growth that these techniques can bring about in learners.

Finally in this section, Maria de los Angeles Clemente argues that in order to become efficient in self-directed learning it is necessary for learners to explore their own metacognitive knowledge from three perspectives, person, task and strategy. She draws on her Oaxaca 97 Project to illustrate one way of focussing on the "person" perspective: the "self task", which requires learners (i) to work through a task sheet that elicits information on the perceived self and the ideal self and (ii) to analyse the answers with the whole learner group. The examples she gives emphasize how very different from one another learners tend to be.

Language learning processes: finding the key to learning effectiveness and learner autonomy?

Jane Nolan

Introduction

As in many ex-Soviet Central European countries, new English language teacher education curricula in the Czech Republic have attempted to move away from a view of education as the transmission of subject knowledge to produce a new generation of more reflective, methodologically aware teachers. This paper outlines a research project carried out at the College of Education in Hradec Králové which demonstrates a systematic attempt to evaluate exactly which activities were most useful for first-year students on an introductory one-semester language learning awareness course in terms of improving their awareness of language learning processes and their ability to reflect on their own language learning as potential tools for promoting learner independence. The course is designed:

- to support students in adapting to a new learning environment at university which is much more challenging linguistically than their previous experience in school, and which requires them to learn more independently;
- to guide students towards successful experience of independent self-reflective language learning as their own learning experiences directly affect their beliefs and practices in their future teaching.

It is maybe relevant here to stress the difficulties in initiating new approaches to learning which require a change of attitude and role. Unless learners are persuaded of the value of the goal and experience a change in their attitude towards what learning is, such attempts are likely to fail (Wenden 1987, p.12). As we have found from our experience in Hradec Králové, higher education is too late for some students to change their perceptions of learning, and there has been a certain resistance on the part of some students to taking increased responsibility for their own learning. Many also display significant weaknesses in their ability to reflect on their own learning which continue into the later stages of the programme, where students demonstrate only limited capabilities to reflect on their teaching practice and their professional development as teachers. Hence the current attempt to systematically examine the procedures we are using to encourage learner independence and to try out some new ones. New elements of the course aimed to:

- encourage learners to reflect on their attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about language learning and improve their ability to reflect on their own language learning;
- increase students' explicit awareness of the factors that influence the language learning process (see, e.g., Dickinson 1992, p.45) and the range of techniques and strategies available to them in their learning both in and out of the classroom;
- make learners more aware of their preferred way of learning to enable them to make more efficient, flexible and informed choices about their learning (see, e.g., Nunan 1991, p.178).

Content and methods

As explained above, the topics covered were beliefs about language learning, language learning processes (skills, grammar and vocabulary), preferred learning activities/cognitive style, and language learning strategies.

The sessions on language learning processes generally consisted of students engaging in a language learning task, e.g., a simulation, learning a number of new words, reading a text and then discussing in groups how they approached the task, their effectiveness in carrying out the task, difficulties encountered and potential solutions. They were then invited to consider a range of approaches to the task, e.g., using compensation strategies when speaking and reflecting on which ones might be useful for them. Loop input was also used, e.g., a jigsaw text on reading processes and purposes, a lecture on listening and how to take notes.

A number of questionnaires on beliefs (prepared by myself), preferred learning activities (Willing, in Richards and Lockhart 1994, pp.50f.), and strategies (SILL, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, Oxford 1990, pp.293–300) were used to gather data on the students' beliefs and language learning behaviour, as well as my own adapted version of the Embedded Strategies Game (Oxford 1990, pp.24–30) and a specially prepared session on using metacognitive strategies.

Students were also required to complete weekly diary entries of their language learning activity over a period of eight weeks where they focussed on what they had learnt that week, how they performed, why, the progress they felt they had made, and what they should do next.

Evaluation

The content and procedures used on the course were evaluated by the students at the end by means of a questionnaire that contained both closed and open questions, firstly asking students how useful they found the different topics and methods used for their language learning, then asking for comments on how these influenced their language learning and how they perceived the role of the activities in the language learning process.

In a follow-up, one semester after the course, students' beliefs and attitudes were re-evaluated for changes and they were asked to report on new approaches and strategies that they continued to use in their language learning but had not used before the course.

Initial beliefs about language learning and attitudes to learner independence

Many of those who have written on strategy or learner training (terms consciously avoided here) have stressed the importance of finding out about students' beliefs, attitudes and motivations as well as their view of their role as the learner and their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning at the beginning of any course (e.g., Horwitz 1987, Wenden 1991, Oxford et al. 1990, Cotterall 1995).

I decided to construct a new instrument appropriate to the particular EFL context of the Czech Republic, although it was broadly based on Horwitz's 34-item Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) contained the following five categories (synthesized from Richards and Lockhart 1994, Wenden 1991, McDonough 1995):

- **Beliefs about the nature of English,** i.e., the importance and status of the English language in the Czech Republic; the perceived difficulty of learning the language and developing appropriate skills.
- **Motivation**, i.e., long-term motivation appropriate to local context.

- **Beliefs about the nature of language learning**, i.e., learning through native speakers, practising and using real English as much as possible, the place of translation and rote-learning in language learning, the role of mistakes, the place of knowledge of English-speaking cultures.
- **Beliefs about the role of the teacher**, i.e., expectations as to the teacher's role in providing short-term motivation, deciding what should be learnt, transmitting knowledge systematically to students, correcting mistakes and evaluating progress.
- **Attitudes to learner autonomy**, i.e., beliefs about their own capabilities as learners (see Wenden 1991, p.52), beliefs about the learner's role in language learning and responsibility for his/her own learning.

The questionnaire was piloted and refined using two groups of teachers and one group of teacher trainers in an attempt to ensure that it adequately reflected Czech beliefs and assumptions about language learning. It was completed by 18 students at the very beginning of the course (and readministered one year later).

As might be expected, at present English enjoys a high status in the Czech Republic and is perceived as only a moderately difficult language for Czechs to learn. All the students were highly motivated instrumentally by the prospect that English would be useful for getting a good job (despite the fact that they were enrolled on a teacher education course).

Although confident in their capabilities as language learners, the fairly limited degree of responsibility most of the class were prepared to take on for their own learning was revealing, with three (at least) seeming to prefer a very teacher-dominated classroom. Although most rejected a strongly authority-oriented view of the teacher as transmitter of a systematic body of knowledge, nearly half expected to learn in class from the teacher only (rejecting the idea that they could learn from other students as well as the teacher) and to be told what to learn (rejecting the idea that they would like to be able to plan, organize and evaluate their own learning and progress). The vast majority claimed that they wanted the teacher to tell them all their mistakes.

The questionnaire also revealed detailed information about students' perceptions of their language learning needs, beliefs and attitudes, which could be taken into account when planning and negotiating the remaining sessions of the course with the students, e.g., the role that reading can play in overall language development, risk-taking, self-monitoring and co-operation during pair and group work (the majority of students agreed that talking in pairs and groups would lead to them picking up others' mistakes).

Changes in students' beliefs during and after the course

Some significant changes could be noted in the students' beliefs even during the course, for example, in their responses to the preferred learning activities questionnaire completed half way through the course, where statements overlapped between the two questionnaires.

Similarities and differences were as follows. Students expressed a strong preference for learning through pair and group work, but whatever their opinions at that point about picking up others' mistakes, interestingly they now rated "finding their own mistakes" as a major learning preference (18 out of 19 said this procedure was good or best), and 10 said explicitly that they only wanted the teacher to tell them all their mistakes a little. Students were still reflecting fairly negative views towards reading in class (11) and at home (8), though this in fact might already be an improvement from the beginning of the course.

When the beliefs questionnaire was readministered at the end of the academic year, the most significant changes concerned the role of the teacher and attitudes to learner autonomy. Students confirmed that they had moved away from expecting to learn everything from the teacher. The vast majority now believed that they could learn from other students as well as the teacher (although two ticked both options) as opposed to less than half in their first responses. Seven had also changed from wanting the teacher to tell them all their mistakes to now disagreeing with this.

Three students seemed to have changed to wanting a more teacher-dominated learning environment. I suspect that, if considered alongside the fact that many students this time ticked both options in the forced choice statements, this shows that they consider the forced choice artificial.

These (and I am sure most Central European) students continue to view the teacher as a significant person from whom they expect to learn. However, they have also clearly moved towards more co-operative learning behaviours where they work and learn together, a definite move and maybe a necessary stage in progress towards more learner autonomy in this type of university context.

Changes in students' learning behaviour

The picture of students' learning behaviour at the end of the course, obtained from analysing their responses to SILL, their use of strategies at a high level, as defined by Oxford (1990), can be classified in order of frequency of use as follows:

1. searching for and communicating meaning, compensation and affective strategies (average 4.0);
2. active, naturalistic language use (average 3.91);
3. traditional Czech study strategies, formal practice including memory strategies (average 3.89);
4. metacognitive, cognitive and analytic strategies (average 3.6).

When students reported the changes in their learning behaviour one semester after the end of the course, they focussed mainly on out-of-class learning activities. Students seem to have responded to the linguistic challenges facing them by working independently (or with friends) outside class and to have made their own decisions on what to focus on and how:

- The majority of changes (eight students) were in organizing learning more efficiently and systematically, which included taking notes in class, making summaries of important information, planning study for each day and week, and reviewing more often.
- Six students were reading regularly for pleasure.
- Six students were regularly listening to recordings from the radio or cassettes with a clear idea of initially listening for gist, then listening repeatedly until they could grasp details.
- Six students had also changed the way they recorded or learnt vocabulary, which included using new words in sentences, making associations with the sound of another word, and keeping better written vocabulary records.
- Three students wrote regularly in English, and one other commented on making drafts before writing.
- Other changes noted by more than one student included talking to another student in English, recording themselves speaking and analysing their fluency and mistakes, simultaneously translating, e.g., the TV news into English (one student translated sermons in church).

It was noticeable not only that students had accepted that they needed to take more responsibility for their learning outside the classroom, but that they were able to articulate and show an awareness that they were using more skilled and efficient procedures than in the past.

The effectiveness of explicit input on language learning processes, preferred learning activities/cognitive learning style and learning strategies in changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviour

Willing claims that differences in cognitive style affect learners' preferences and that learners can be categorized by type ("concrete", "analytical", "communicative" or "authority-oriented") according to the pattern of their responses on the questionnaire (Richards & Lockhart 1994, pp.59–62; Nunan 1991, p.170). Unfortunately, however I analysed my subjects' responses, I was unable to come to any conclusions about individual learners' cognitive style. Students came out as varying mixtures of all four "types", with results skewed towards the "communicative". I therefore concluded that the questionnaire was not an adequate vehicle for determining students' individual styles as had been hoped. However, a similar pattern of balanced learner types also emerged from the analysis of the SILL questionnaire (see above). Here students balanced more "communicative" behaviours, which require them to compensate for their lack of knowledge, against traditional "authority-oriented" study habits (as defined by Willing), though they were slightly less "analytic". This may in fact reflect the flexibility of the students; that they considered all behaviours grist for the learning mill.

Students' evaluation of the impact of this explicit input on learner styles and strategies was mixed (see Appendix B). This presumably reflects the fact that after being introduced to the concept of cognitive style the questionnaire did not deliver any clear results, and that several students claimed to find the full SILL classification of strategies confusing and "over-scientific". On the positive side, however, the responses to the open questions clearly showed that taking an overview of strategy use had made students aware of the strategies that lay behind their learning behaviour and broadened their view of the processes involved in language learning, particularly social and affective factors and planning and organizing their learning more systematically. Many saw strategies as a problem-solving tool to help them overcome learning difficulties and make their studying more efficient, while recognizing that it was up to them to find the ways that were "the most suitable for me".

Students rated the sessions on language learning processes more highly as influencing their language learning behaviour than the focus on preferred learning activities, cognitive style and strategies considered above (see Appendix B) and mentioned changes in their language learning behaviour in their responses to the open questions in this section of the evaluation. There was also high approval for the teacher input, group discussions and practical activities. Although it is difficult to separate content from method or the fact that strategies were also discussed and practised in these sessions, student responses seem to indicate that students found the explicit focus on language learning processes most useful and that it had the most direct impact on changing the way they approached their language learning.

Comparative "public" and "private" procedures for developing reflection and language learning awareness

A combination of different "public" retrospective procedures (e.g., group discussions and report back, group poster making) and "private" retrospective procedures (e.g., diaries, individual questionnaires) were used throughout the course to develop reflection and language learning awareness (see Matsumoto 1996, p.144).

Keeping a language learning diary

All students chose to write their diaries at home and in English rather than Czech. A small number submitted them regularly to the teacher in the form of a dialogue journal.

In the end-of-course evaluation students rated the keeping of the diaries most highly of all the course activities. This result was somewhat surprising to me. Keeping a diary is very time-consuming and was thus likely, I thought, to be very problematic with students in the Czech Republic, who can have up to 37 hours of class a week. For this reason I had had severe reservations about asking students to keep a diary in the first place.

At first students' diaries mainly focussed on what they had been taught (rather than what they had learnt). Gradually their focus broadened to more out-of-class activities and they began to reflect on the value and efficiency of the reading they were doing. By the end their focus had broadened again to reflect on when, where and how they were organizing and planning their learning, and on the resources and opportunities they were utilizing.

- Four of the students chose to comment only on how the diary had

improved their writing, or on the fact that writing it served as a useful review or revision of what they had done that week (two of these, however, were lengthy reflections on the writing process, putting thoughts in order, drafting, revising, how they had improved).
- Most commented that essentially it had made them reflect on their learning, made them "organize their thoughts", made them aware of "things and problems I wouldn't normally notice", and how they could plan to improve systematically.
- Several noted that actually having to write about it made their progress more apparent; they weren't used to evaluating their own progress as the teacher had always done it.
- Several also stated that the diary "motivates you to learn" and made them work harder and "pay more attention to my performance in class".

Questionnaires and group discussions

The "private" act of filling in questionnaires was not universally popular, 3-4 students strongly disagreeing that they were useful and another 3-4 not sure that they were useful.

When questionnaires were used in conjunction with group discussions (thus combining "public" and "private"), however, 18 out of the 20 students found the procedure useful for their language learning. In the section reserved for comments, students pointed out that they were interested in what other people did or thought. In this section, their remarks on the questionnaires were in fact quite positive about their usefulness in making them think about what sort of learner they are and their attitudes towards studying a foreign language, indicating that questionnaires can be a useful framework for discussion and reflection. They also provided information that helped the teacher to make the content and processes of the course appropriate for the students.

Conclusions

It could be said that currently, these Czech students are continuing to focus, as traditionally, on language as a system, while taking full advantage of the opportunities that now exist to use language for communication. Similarly, they continue to attach importance to the role of the teacher but are now prepared to take some responsibility for their own learning, particularly outside of the classroom, again maybe combining what they see as the best of the "old" and the "new". Encouraging students to co-operate and learn together and from each other also seems to be a significant stage on the path away from the dependency on the teacher they experienced in school.

It does indeed seem that language learning diaries can function as an instrument for "self-awareness, self-analysis and self-evaluation" (Matsumoto 1996, p. 144), thereby promoting more autonomous behaviour, although this may not be an option when students are less motivated. Input on language learning processes, including strategies, combined with group discussions and practical activities followed by reflection, also seem to have contributed most effectively to changing students' beliefs and behaviour.

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Appendix A

BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Circle as appropriate: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree

1. English is the most important world language 1 2 3 4 not sure
2. In the Czech Republic people feel it is important to speak English 1 2 3 4 not sure
3. I think English will be useful for me to get a good job 1 2 3 4 not sure
4. I would like to be a teacher of English one day 1 2 3 4 not sure
5. I ***mainly*** want to learn English to travel and make friends 1 2 3 4 not sure
6. I have a talent for learning languages 1 2 3 4 not sure
7. I believe I will reach an advanced level of proficiency in English 1 2 3 4 not sure
8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures to learn English well 1 2 3 4 not sure
9. The best way to learn English is to make use of opportunities to speak with native-speakers of the language 1 2 3 4 not sure
10. It is useful to try things out in English even if we make mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure
11. We can learn through making mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure
12. Talking to other Czech students in pairs and groups in class might lead me to pick up their mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure
13. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure
14. Learning by heart is a useful technique to learn a language for me 1 2 3 4 not sure
15. Translating from / into Czech is a useful technique to learn a language for me 1 2 3 4 not sure

Follow the instructions in the right column

16. English is: _ a very difficult
_ a difficult
_ a moderately difficult language to learn (tick as appropriate)
_ an easy
_ a very easy

17. The most ***difficult*** aspect of learning English ***for me*** is learning:
_ to speak
_ to understand
(number in order of difficulty 1-7, 1 being most difficult)

_ to read well (number in order of difficulty 1-7, 1 being most difficult)
_ to write
_ to pronounce
_ grammar
_ vocabulary and idioms

18. The most ***important*** part of learning English ***for me*** is: (number in order of importance 1-8, 1 being most important)
_ to speak fluently
_ to speak accurately
_ to understand well in most situations
_ to read fluently
_ to write appropriately
_ to pronounce well
_ to know lots of words and idioms
_ to know grammar well

In the following section tick the statement you agree with ***most***. You may partially agree with both statements.

18. ___ The teacher is an expert who passes on to students all he or she knows about the language
___ The teacher is an expert who helps students discover their own most effective ways of learning according to the students' needs

19. ___ The teacher should provide lots of opportunities for students to work on, discover and practise the language.
___ The teacher should explain grammar rules and present vocabulary ***systematically***

20. ___ We learn about language in class as a preparation for using it in the real world later
___ It is important to practise and use English in real-life situations in class as much as possible

21. ___ I expect to learn English from the teacher
___ I think I can learn from other students in the class as well as the teacher

22. ___ I would like to be capable of planning and organising my own learning with some help from teacher
___ I prefer the teacher to tell me what to learn

23. ___ I would like to be capable of evaluating my own progress in English
___ I prefer the teacher assess my progress

24. ___ It is the teacher's job to make lessons interesting and encourage me to learn
___ I will learn more if I, the student, participate fully in class and take advantage of what learning opportunities arise

APPENDIX B: COURSE EVALUATION

TOPIC	*1.*	*2.*	*3.*	*4.*	*5.*	*METHOD / ACTIVITY*	*1.*	*2.*	*3.*	*4.*	*5.*
1. Beliefs about language learning	2	11	1		6	Filling in questionnaire	3	8	4	1	4
						Group discussion	8	10		1	1
2. Language learning processes											
a. speaking	6	9	3		2	Teacher input	8	10	1		1
b. listening	7	12	1			Group discussions	7	11		1	1
c. reading	7	12	2		1	Class discussions	2	8	6	1	2
d. writing	6	12	1		1	Practical activities	8	10	1		
e. grammar	5	10	3		2						
f. vocabulary	5	10	2		3						
3. Thinking about own language learning	12	5	2			Diaries	6	13	1		
4. Preferred learning activities/ learning style	6	8			6	Questionnaire	3	12	4		1
5. Language learning strategies	8	8	1			Strategies game	1	9	3		3
						SILL questionnaire	1	10		1	7

1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree; 5 = not sure that the topics and activities were useful for their language learning

Towards autonomy in university classrooms: the role of learners' goals*

Jennifer Ridley

Introduction

A characteristic of autonomous foreign language learners is that they are able to identify their own needs, strengths and weaknesses and to set appropriate goals accordingly. Thus learners need to develop what Breen and Mann (1997) refer to as the learner's "robust sense of self" and a "strategic engagement with learning". Learners who make frequent use of self-access facilities are often supported in this respect by counsellors, as Karlsson et al. (1997) describe. However, those whose learning place is a formal classroom have far fewer opportunities to reflect on the learning process through talking about it to someone else. In universities especially, classroom-based learners are often under great time pressure to master a predetermined set of linguistic/behavioural objectives, and their principal opportunity for reflection is within the context of feedback from examination grades. Their teachers meanwhile might reasonably assume that mature and motivated learners have already acquired self-knowledge and also the ability to engage in an effortful way with the various demands of the learning programme. Such an assumption is, however, often ill-founded.

This paper is concerned with some of the difficulties facing university teachers who want to promote autonomy among learners who seem poor at taking responsibility for their own learning. I have in mind contexts where learners enter university with no experience of an autonomy-based school learning environment such as Dam (1995) describes. The paper focusses on the role which learners' personal, implicit goals and expectations can play in shaping how they set about learning. I am distinguishing here between, on the one hand, goals as explicit,

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statable targets which serve as easily recognizable benchmarks for learners' self-monitoring and self-evaluation (points along the learning continuum where a learner can say, for example, that he can perform a certain task efficiently and effectively) and on the other hand less explicit goals and expectations which are associated with the learners' self-concept (Markus and Wurf 1987). These latter goals are not necessarily available for spontaneous introspection, and in this regard they differ from a person's metacognitive knowledge about himself, which by definition involves conscious reflection and insight into the workings of his mind (Flavell 1976). Research into learner autonomy has tended to focus on a person's metacognitive self-knowledge (e.g., Wenden 1991); however, as Markus and Wurf show, there is a dynamic and bidirectional relationship between self-conceptions and goal setting which involves our cognitive and emotional responses to the demands of the outside world.

The complex nature of the links between, on the one hand, people's personality, attitudes, beliefs, self-conceptions, motivation, goals, and on the other hand their learning and/or performance behaviour is reflected in different fields of research which all have implications for whether learners are able, or willing, to take on responsibility for their learning. A clear example is Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and human agency: "self-efficacy beliefs function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, affect and action" (1989, p.1175). Another aspect of learning behaviour with obvious implications for autonomous learning is the phenomenon of learned helplessness (Diener and Dweck 1978): some learners tend towards a "helpless" response to tasks; others tend towards a "mastery-oriented" response. Such tendencies may be fairly stable, but they are amenable to change because of the response which certain tasks can suddenly trigger within individuals. In this respect teachers can help learners by providing them with activities and materials which stimulate motivational thinking and mental engagement; however, individual learners vary in their responses to tasks. Constanzo et al. (1992) describe how learners' various levels of expectancy, as an aspect of motivation, maximize or minimize success in the performance of a task. They suggest that learners perform tasks most effectively when they are under "optimal pressure" – a phenomenon which, naturally, varies from person to person. Finally, we have to bear in mind that learners vary in the ways in which they (unconsciously) prioritize learning goals. Dweck and Leggett (1988) distinguish between learners who tend to be driven by performance goals (where they are primarily concerned with gaining favourable judgements of their competence) and those with a tendency towards learning goals (where the prime aim is increasing competence). Ames (1992) further specifies learning goals as mastery goals, which are manifest in terms of learners putting effort into tasks. The notion that mastery goals are characterized by persistence and effort ties in with the "strategic engagement" aspect of autonomous learners, referred to above.

Within the context of language learning at university-level there is empirical evidence to suggest links between learners' goals (as an aspect of their motivation) and their self-conceptions and the various ways which they set about learning. For example, Ushioda (1996) describes how university learners in an apparently homogeneous group vary with regard to the (changing) array of factors which they believe shape their motivation and learning. There is also evidence that learners' self-conceptions shape their personal agendas for learning, which in turn affect the types of learning strategies and problem-solving strategies they deploy in tasks where they experience difficulties (Ridley 1997a, b).

When classroom teachers want to help language learners to reflect on their own goals (in other words to help implicit goals and expectations become explicit), four key problems arise. First, as Dörnyei (1994, p.278) observes, there is the phenomenon of a classroom "group goal" which has a life of its own. (Dörnyei gives as an example the learner group whose goal is to have fun rather than to learn.) Secondly, learners' motivation and self-conceptions are dynamic, in the sense that they evolve over time, partly as a response to the learning environment. Thus there is a case to be argued against giving once-off questionnaires at the start of a course. Thirdly, written questions or statements designed to elicit learners' beliefs and goals may yield useful cross-sectional quantitative data in the form of learners' metacognitive knowledge; however, they are unlikely to tap either underlying motivational goals referred to already, or learners' implicit subjective theories which also may shape their learning behaviour (Grotjahn 1991). Finally, teachers cannot *make* learners intentionally set appropriate goals – and here we have to ask the question: appropriate for whom? – any more than teachers can expect that learners will take in, take up and act on advice they are given about strategies for effective learning. Learning strategies, like goals, are personal in the sense that they are related to a variety of components of an individual's personality. In short, when learner goals and their associated strategies are seen from the perspective of learner autonomy, we need to take into account what Little (1991, p.4) refers to as the learner's "psychological relation to the process and content of his learning".

The remainder of this paper touches on some of these issues by giving an example of how an apparently homogeneous classroom group of highly motivated learners can vary in their goal orientations and learning patterns. It refers to a pedagogical experiment where a class of university students was told about the various benefits which ensue from taking an autonomous approach to their learning. One learner in the group, referred to as learner G, is discussed in more detail because she stands out as being reluctant to become more autonomous in her learning. It is inferred that this essentially passive learner does not tend towards mastery goals (as described above with reference to Ames [1992]); that she deliberately makes the choice to remain teacher-dependent; and that we can gain additional insight into her unwillingness to become a more independent learner by observing how she collaborates with – and relies on – another learner in a writing task.

The pedagogical experiment

The experiment was carried out with a class of fifteen learners in a degree programme in French for Business Studies. The course was intensive and the learners, already high achievers at school, were motivated to do well. Their teacher felt, however, that they tended to lack the ability to manage their own learning. We decided to introduce the group to the notion of autonomy in a special session, and by way of follow-up the learners would be encouraged to deploy deliberate strategies of planning their work in relation to their needs and of monitoring their progress in the light of their strengths and weaknesses. The syllabus involved a weekly class of summary writing in French, and these hours became the opportunity for group reflection and discussion. For example, the teacher and the learners jointly constructed a model of a French summary, and a handout was produced which identified key strategies and target performance criteria. The aim was to make the learners "task aware": it was hoped that the handout guidelines would help them to acquire their own mental formulation of what a culturally-determined text type is. It was also hoped that they would become sensitive to the need for planning, monitoring and evaluating their task performances.

In the special session for the discussion of the concept autonomy the group was asked to reflect on the definition given by Little (1991, p.4) which highlights the value of learners' reflectivity and independent decision-making. They were also told about the potential benefits which follow when learners become more reflective in their approaches to learning. They then discussed the following points:

- learning occurs at an implicit and explicit level;
- learners often experience problems associated with attention or motivation;
- learners benefit from paying attention to input and from deliberately trying to get to grips with the intricacies of the target language;
- learner autonomy involves managing one's own learning.

The aim of this discussion was to encourage reflection on learners' beliefs, assumptions and expectations. In subsequent classes the learners were constantly encouraged to relate the theoretical aspects of this special session to their own learning/performance habits and tactics.

Four months later ten learners from the group talked individually about their French learning. In semi-structured interviews the conversations included the question what they thought autonomy was. From the learners came four types of response which can be paraphrased thus:

- I'm still working out what it means for me (5 learners)
- It's good and I think I'm like that in any case (2 learners)
- It sounds good but it doesn't suit my personality (2 learners)
- It sounds good but I don't want to be like that (1 learner, G).

In a later part of the experiment the same ten learners wrote a summary working in pairs at a computer. The five sessions were observed and tape-recorded. From their dialogues it was possible to gain insight into the extent to which they put into practice what they had learnt, during the previous months, about the functions of different strategies for successful summary writing, especially planning, monitoring and evaluating what they produced.

There is increasingly a consensus of opinion that learners benefit from performing writing tasks in pairs or small groups. According to Vygotskian theory (e.g., Vygotsky 1978), the importance of interactional dialogue lies in the fact that higher cognitive functions have their origins in social interaction. The use of instructional scaffolding, which includes the practice of peer tutoring, has a similar rationale: it is based on the social constructivist notion that learners construct knowledge through dialogue. As learners talk their way through tasks, implicit cognitive processes become explicit. The advantages of two learners constructing a text at a computer is that the procedure itself invites evaluation and monitoring by the learners themselves.

The aim of the analysis of each pair's dialogue was to see what each learner tended to focus attention on; whether, for example, they were so caught up in problem solving that they failed to deploy the metacognitive strategies they knew were important. The method of analysis followed that of Kowal and Swain (1994), who investigate the dialogue of pairs in a collaborative writing task. Kowal and Swain gain insight into what learners focus their attention on by using the notion of language-related episodes to characterize the learners' talk. An episode can vary in length (two turns or many more turns) and it is defined in terms of the main topic of the learners' utterances. Language-related episodes can be categorized further according to whether the learners talk about meaning or linguistic form. An example of a meaning-related episode is where two of our learners wonder what a sentence in the original text means:

I: (*reading the original text, and choosing to converse in French*)
qu'est-ce ça veut dire?
J: il s'agit de ...

An example of a form-related episode:

E: is there an accent on election?
F: I can't remember
E: I think there is

Each pair was given approximately forty minutes to complete the task. Although the main concern was to see the extent to which each pair actually deployed the metacognitive strategies they knew were important for this task, it was first necessary to explore what they were talking about at times when they were actually engaged in carrying out the task. Table 1 below refers to instances where the learners' attention is overtly focussed on the reading of the text and writing their own versions.

Subjects	A/B	C/D	E/F	G/H	I/J
Meaning-related episodes	7	4	5	5	3
Form-related episodes	9	16	18	17	6

Table 1
Total number of meaning-related and form-related episodes in each dialogue

We see here that there is broad similarity across the pairs in the extent to which they focus attention on meanings; two pairs, however (A and B, I and J) pay noticeably less attention to linguistic forms. One possible explanation is that these learners chose to converse in French, and this choice seemed to be linked to their generally high levels of self-confidence. Moreover the rapid speed with which these learners worked indicated that they were operating on the basis of intuitive feel, with little time given to overt grammatical monitoring.

Table 2 below reveals something about the extent to which the learners put into practice what they knew about effective strategies for summary writing. All turns which were related to the execution of the task (where the learners stand back from what they are doing and plan, monitor or edit their performance in relation to what the task requires of them) were counted. An example of a task-related episode:

> G: didn't she [the teacher] say we had to change things round?

Subjects	A/B	C/D	E/F	G/H	I/J
	20	27	6	5	15

Table 2
Total number of task-related turns in each dialogue, expressed as a percentage of the total number of turns in each dialogue

Here we see that the learners vary in the extent to which they devote attention to the execution of the task: learners E / F and G / H spend noticeably less time than the others reflecting on what they think they should be doing or indeed are doing. They have been exposed to as much classroom talk about metacognitive strategies as the others; on this occasion, however, they do not appear to apply what they know. Interestingly, the longer time which the other pairs take to reflect on their overall performance does not seem to be associated with proficiency levels: learners C and D are generally the weakest in the group. Yet as well as deliberating on lower-level features such as morphosyntax or orthography (as distinct from higher-level semantics) they put great strategic effort into planning and checking what they do.

Another inference to be made from the four learners who do not discuss the task regularly at a "meta" level, as we would like them to do, is that they do not apply optimal mental effort. All ten learners said they felt very enthusiastic about the task and all repeated afterwards that they had tried very hard to do their best. Such general statements do not, however, provide insight into the extent to which learners actually engage with the task, or with each other. One way of finding out what is going on behind utterances in oral interaction is to use the idea of framing in discourse (Tannen 1993). For example, in a discourse analysis of a clinical session involving a doctor, a child patient and the child's mother, Tannen and Wallat (1993) use the notions of knowledge schemas and frames to interpret the underlying metamessage of each utterance. Tannen and Wallat's argument is based on the premise that dialogue operates on the basis of "interactive frames", a term used to describe what people think they are doing when they talk to each other, and the types of expectations which underpin utterances: "What individuals choose to say in an interaction grows out of multiple knowledge schemas regarding the issues under discussion, the participants, the setting and so on" (ibid., p.69). Using the work of Goffman as a model, they describe how interactive frames in a dialogue are related to the participants' knowledge schemas (expectations about the situation, or the relationship between speakers). Speakers use linguistic cues such as lexis or intonation to develop their own frames of discourse or to interpret those of others. In what is referred to as a communicative move (and as researched, for example, by Walsh [1997] with regard to rising intonation or use of a particular word), a "metamessage" is conveyed which "frames" a sequence of discourse.

Following this notion of speakers setting up frames, we can explore further our learners' talk in terms of how they relate to each other and the situation. It is possible to make inferences about each learner's expectations of the task, including perhaps their expectations of their own behaviour in relation to their partner. Focussing now on learner G, I shall compare how she and partner H begin their conversation as they settle down to write their summary in French. It is noticeable that G's first turns are on the topic of the gender of the word she has in mind for the title, rather than higher-level linguistic or semantic matters:

G: so uh ... it's *votre manque* ... would it be *du* or *de la*?
H: I think it's *de*
G: do you want to type?
H: OK
G: so what does this mean?
H: I don't know what *éconduit* means

If we compare this rather unfocussed beginning to that of learners A and B, we see that the latter show evidence of metacognitive control over the task in that they start by organizing themselves in top-down fashion. They immediately establish a task-centred frame:

A: as-tu les instructions d'hier?
B: oui
A: il y avait
B: nous faisons un petit plan pour le premier paragraphe parce que ça c'est beaucoup trop long
A: oui d'accord...on va faire par chaque paragraphe?
B: oui d'accord
A: et le titre?

Here and throughout the task the lexical choices of learners A and B suggest collaborative effort: "nous faisons", "on va faire", "d'accord". Later on they build sentences a phrase or word at a time, taking turns in rapid succession. We can conclude they manage the task well and are mentally engaged in it.

Learners G and H, on the other hand, show less evidence of mental effort. Learner G in particular tends to wait for her partner to come up with answers (as in the example above: "so what does this mean?"). Both learners feel they are of the same proficiency level, and their grades support this. We might interpret G's passive role in the task as a manifestation of her expectation (her knowledge schema) of her subordinate role as a learner within the class. It is striking that learner G, in the interview questions about the nature of autonomy described earlier, understands the potential benefits of independent thinking but does not want, at her advanced stage of learning French, to make changes in her approach. When questioned further she replies that it might work if we had "caught her sooner". It is reasonable to infer that her unwillingness to be more active and effortful mentally might indicate that she lacks mastery goals in her learning, which, as we saw earlier with reference to Ames (1992), are characterized by persistence and effort. In other words, this learner does not appear to be in control of her own learning, nor does she particularly want to be.

Conclusion

This snapshot insight into one learner's approach to her learning has certain implications for classroom teaching at university level. First, learners may become very set in learning habits which require too much effort for them to break. Their implicit goals and self-conceptions can play a role in shaping their learning behaviour. Secondly, what learners say about their own learning does not necessarily provide us with the whole picture regarding what drives it; for one thing their self-knowledge may not be sophisticated enough to articulate such things. Thirdly, learners' knowledge about the usefulness of certain strategies for specific tasks and about the potential benefits which ensue when learners manage their own learning does not necessarily mean that this knowledge will be acted upon. Exploring performance data, as a supplement to talking to learners about their learning approaches, can provide some insight into possible reasons for this. Finally, the experiment shows that turning older, experienced learners around towards greater autonomy is a complex affair which can take a surprisingly long time.

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Do they mean what they say? Learners' representations of needs and objectives

Felicity Kjisik and Joan Nordlund

Introduction

We would like to begin this paper by going back to look at two classic definitions of autonomy.

According to Henri Holec (1981, p.3), "Learner autonomy is when the learner is willing and capable of taking charge of his/her own learning". In other words, the learner should be capable of "determining the objectives; defining the contents and the progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition...; evaluating what has been acquired."

Ten years later, David Little (1991, p.4) writes, "Essentially, autonomy is a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning."

The capacity both these writers refer to here is not like the capacity to drive a car or ride a bicycle but it refers to thinking, i.e., it assumes that the autonomous learner is a reflective person. This is the subject of the present paper – the reflective abilities of language learners. We are going to look at, firstly, the learners' thoughts, i.e., their attitudes and beliefs about learning, language learning, their self-concepts, and their own needs and objectives, and then, secondly, at various ways of helping learners to become reflective or more effectively reflective, and in particular at the ways we use in Helsinki University Language Centre.

It is now accepted that each individual builds up a highly personal view of the world. Jennifer Ridley (1997), in her useful overview of the literature on learners' belief systems, points out that different writers have used different terms for this. For example, Kelly (1963) talks of "world constructs", be they of the world as a whole or of smaller units such as the classroom, while others talk of "subjective theories" (Grotjahn 1991) or "mental models".

An individual's thoughts include thoughts about him/herself. More and more it is seen that a person's self-concept has considerable bearing on their learning. Ema Ushioda (1996), for example, writes that motivation is highly influenced by a strong self-concept. The self-concept is made up of various schemata which build up in our mind throughout life and are closely linked to our past, present and future. It is moving, changing and dynamic. It varies in different contexts. Of particular importance for teachers is that the self-concept affects a learner's behaviour and it is closely related to the social setting, such as the classroom or the sub-group.

Naturally, the outside world also has a clear influence on the individual's way of thinking and on the self-concept. The systems of cultural meanings within any society will have a direct bearing on the individual. While we should always be aware of individual differences within our classroom, of course there are some broad generalizations or expectations that teachers will have or will learn from experience. Included in this world view will be the myths or "folk" theories about languages and language learning, such as "French is beautiful", "German has a lot of grammar".

It would seem important, then, that any language learning programme that hopes to encourage autonomy should encourage increased awareness of these three – the individual, the self concept and the prevailing world view. Self-awareness is increased by talk, especially in groups, where the individual will hear other attitudes and beliefs. Of course, there is the problem that what a person says is not necessarily the same as what a person actually does. For example, you may be able to make your students aware of learning strategies, but this does not guarantee that they will use them.

Incorporating reflection in the classroom

We would like to continue by making suggestions as to how to increase the learner's capacity for reflection. We recognize that learners come to us with varying capacities for reflection and expression of their beliefs, their attitudes, their needs and their objectives. We would like to demonstrate where it appears in our particular programme, and show some models and examples. Our contention is that learners can develop this capacity, given support, and we will also try to offer evidence of change in this process. To do this we will give examples of student statements and we will locate them in the time frame of our programme. It is not our intention here to describe the programme itself in great detail (for a full account of the ALMS project see Karlsson et al. 1997).

Awareness of language learning

When we meet the students on autonomous modules in Helsinki University Language Centre for the first time, the aim is to raise their awareness of themselves as language learners, and of their capacity for independent language learning. Most of these students have been learning English for ten years at school, and they have usually learned other languages too. This implies that they should know something about language teaching, even if they do not consider themselves experts on language learning.

In our experience, most students are happy to talk about their experiences of learning languages, positive and negative. We have found that a simple questionnaire such as the one devised by Gail Ellis and Barbara Sinclair in their book Learning to Learn English (1989), works very well. The questions are the following, and students tick one of four columns – usually, sometimes, almost never and don't know:

1. Do you get good results in grammar tests?
2. Do you have a good memory for new words?
3. Do you hate making mistakes?
4. In class, do you get irritated if mistakes are not corrected?
5. Is your pronunciation better when you read aloud than when you have a conversation?
6. Do you wish you had more time to think before speaking?
7. Do you enjoy being in class?
8. Do you find it difficult to pick up more than two or three words of a new language when you are on holiday abroad?
9. Do you like to learn new rules, grammar and words by heart?

Students score 3 points for each *usually*, 2 for each *sometimes*, 1 for each *almost never* and 0 for each *don't know*. High scores (23-7) are said to indicate analytical learning, and low scores (9-13) more relaxed learning. Scores in the middle are a mixture, which is where most people fit; very low scores suggest lack of reflection. We do not pretend that this analysis is the only or best one, or that one style is better than another for all individuals. Both styles have their advantages in certain contexts. Our sole purpose is to encourage students who have not previously done so to reflect on what they are doing in the language classroom (and sometimes outside), and to think about their previous experience and how it has affected them.

Language learning strategies

There has been a great deal of discussion about how to deal with language learning strategies in the classroom. If, for example, we ask what evidence there is of the success of explicit strategy training, we come up against two main problems. Firstly, although we may have fairly comprehensive descriptions and taxonomies of language learning strategies, do we really know which are good strategies? Sometimes, what are reported as good strategies (such as correcting fellow students, volunteering), merely reflect certain ethnocentric assumptions. Furthermore, different strategies may only be good at certain levels of proficiency. Secondly, even if we could pinpoint good strategies, can we actually teach them? And if we do teach them, do the students actually use them, continue to use them in the future and, most important, do they actually perform better? Research is not conclusive on these matters.

However, amongst our group of teachers in autonomy, whilst we have considerable doubts about explicit training, we have no doubts about the importance of raising the students' awareness of these issues. Additionally, we feel that rather than lecturing on or listing strategies, we try to get the students to experience and verbalize them. In practice, we ask them to perform a task which calls for many of the skills involved in communication, whilst, simultaneously, they are asked to reflect on what is happening in the process. The task we set is shown in Figure 1.

When the students report the contents of the clippings to the class, we also discuss the questions and write whatever they say on an overhead transparency. Quickly the overhead fills up with comments like:

"We asked questions."
"We discussed what this word could mean."
"I guessed."
"I used my own knowledge of the subject."
"My partner knew about the subject."

Work in pairs. Take a newspaper clipping different from your partner's. Read the clipping. Make notes. Memorise the main points. Explain the contents of the article to your partner. Your partner will then report the contents to the class. Whilst you are doing this task think about and discuss the following questions:

How do you make sense of the article?
How do you memorise things?
How do you overcome difficulties in comprehension?
How do you feel when learning or using English?
How do you use/help your partner?

Figure 1
Strategy task

"I noted the main points."
"I made a mind map."
"I was nervous about reporting to the class."
"I tried to get the main points."
"I ignored what I didn't know."
"We spent too long on the first one."
"I tried to get the idea from the picture and the headline."
"I read the whole thing through first."
"I remembered reading about this in the paper."
"I wrote down what my partner said to help remember."

Inevitably, we end up with a pretty thorough coverage of most of the strategies that have been documented. Rebecca Oxford, for example, has devised a system of strategies used in language learning (1990). She divides them into six broad groups – memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. In our classes we briefly describe this taxonomy and the students can clearly see how their own remarks fit into the system. This approach dispels the feeling in the students that there is something extraordinary or mystical in language learning strategies. They also realize that they already use many strategies, but they could be used more systematically, and new ones could be adopted – for example, planning, controlling anxiety and using their peers constructively.

Analysis of students' own strategies

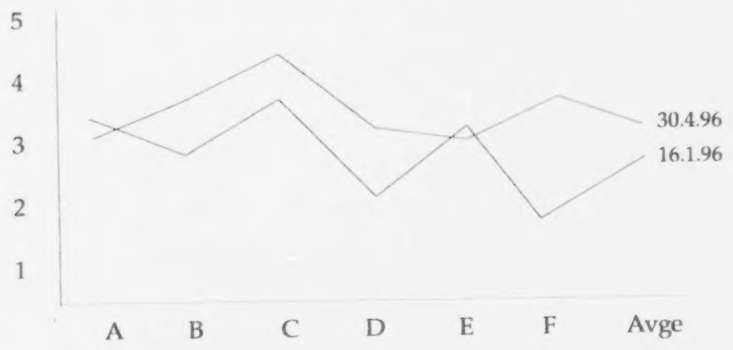
As a further aid to students in developing and controlling their language learning, we ask them to complete Rebecca Oxford's questionnaire about individual strategies, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Students are asked to assess on a scale of one to five how frequently they act in a certain way. For those unfamiliar with this questionnaire, the first section is as follows:

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new word and an image or picture of it to help me remember.
4. I remember a new word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

The scores are calculated and the student ends up with a profile of strategies, grouped according to Oxford's taxonomy. Students make their personal strategy profile both at the beginning and at the end of the programme. The profile shapes at the beginning and the end are usually similar, but some changes occur. In the example shown in Figure 2, one student showed weak strategy behaviour in the areas of organizing and evaluating learning, and in learning with others, at the beginning of the programme. At the end there was a clear "improvement" in these areas – although we must be aware that these are only two photographs, and we all vary in our approach and behaviour from day to day.

Needs analysis

Having discussed the more psychological aspects of language learning, we move on to the more concrete aspects. In order to make study plans, students need to be able to analyse their needs. This is another area in which they will usually have had little experience. In Finland, as elsewhere, planning the study programme has almost exclusively been the task of the teacher, if not of the National Board of Education which sets



A = group of strategies: remembering more effectively
B = group of strategies: using all your mental processes
C = group of strategies: compensating for missing knowledge
D = group of strategies: organising and evaluating your learning
E = group of strategies: managing your emotions
F = group of strategies: learning with others
Avge = your overall average

Figure 2
One student's strategy profile at the beginning and at the end of an ALMS module (adapted from SILL, Oxford 1990)

the national curriculum. Most students, therefore, if asked what they think they should learn, are a little lost. Some, however, do come to our courses with vague aims or expectations, such as wanting to practise speaking or wanting to learn the special vocabulary of their subject, but our aim is to help them to be more specific as to their needs and aims. In order to help with this we give them a needs analysis questionnaire to complete. We have tried to include most of the situations or functions in which students might need English in the present or future. They can of course add more of their own. Figure 3 gives an extract from our needs analysis.

At this point we also introduce the question of evaluation. We ask the students to assess their own level in each functional area. This is simply the start on the road to becoming a self-evaluator. It is something we come back to during the programme, especially in the counselling sessions, when we ask them to come up with ways of evaluating their

	NEEDS		LEVEL
	NOW	FUTURE	
LANGUAGE FOCUS			
READING *reading academic articles or texts*			
reading literature			
reading newspapers or magazines			
WRITING *writing essays, reports*			
writing academic articles/papers			
creative writing			
writing curriculum vitae			
writing a diary			
writing formal letters			
LISTENING *listening to lectures, talks, presentations*			
listening to conversation, discussions			
listening to entertainment (e.g., TV, films)			
SPEAKING *holding social conversation*			
taking part in group discussions (eg.tutorials)			
having interviews			
giving talks and presentations			
OTHERS			

Figure 3
Extract from the ALMS Needs Analysis Form

own learning so that they can show themselves (and us, the teachers) that they are progressing. This, then, gives them the means to make more concrete and specific study plans instead of vague objectives such as "more words, more grammar, more talk".

We also ask them to consider how they will satisfy their needs, i.e., if they have specified the need to improve their social skills or their academic writing, what would be the best way to do so? We hope that they will come up with their own ideas and methods, before we make any suggestions. They are invited to make a "wish list" which comprises their hopes and intentions for the coming term.

Contracts

From the area of needs, we then move on to the fulfilment of them. What objectives can be set? How will the student go about meeting these objectives?

This is an area that many students find new, or strange – "the teacher should know what we need". To help them, we introduce the idea of plans and contracts. We ask them to draft their learning programme, to write down what they need to learn, how they will learn it, how long it will take them, and how they will know that they have learned. This also serves to introduce them to the reflection process. We encourage them to work in groups at this point, and to draw up a plan of potentialities. Again, they often need help here, so we describe the types of programmes that have been set up before – individual and group projects, various interest groups which are mainly for conversation, but also for writing, and teacher-fronted support groups. These include writing and oral presentation skills, conversation groups, drama and so on.

The following week, after some time for reflection, the students meet again to draw up the actual contract which covers their term's work. The contract is not intended to be a straitjacket but is there to help them specify their needs, their methods and their scheduling. They are, of course, able to modify their contract as the term progresses.

Counselling

Counselling forms an essential part of the ALMS Programme. It is provided as a support to the students and a check on their progress, both in terms of their work and in terms of their increasing autonomy.

There is a minimum of three counselling sessions per student

3. **Please give one or two concrete examples of how your English has improved.**
- Maybe I haven't learnt that much new words, but it has become easier for me to find the words I knew from the beginning ... I mean that I am not that nervous anymore – my reading has become more fluent
- I need a dictionary less than before thanks to my own vocabulary list.

4. **How have you been evaluating your learning?**
- I haven't done any systematic evaluating if that's what you mean. But being able to use words that I haven't known before has given hints to me that something has happened.
- Self-evaluation is becoming a natural part of learning, and it increases my motivation to learn more. I mean – when you think afterwards what you have done that makes you learning task-oriented!

5. **How do you see yourself now, as a language learner? What, if any, changes have you noticed since you started the programme?**
- Before this programme I didn't see myself as a language learner at all. I was just a simple user of one of the foreign language known to me. Now – consciously or unconsciously – I try to get into situations where I have a possibility to use my language and maybe to improve it in some way.
- I see myself as a language learner who has got going. I have got self-confidence and feel myself no more as a hopeless case.
- The most important thing for me is, that it suddenly has become fun to learn new things. You don't have to know that much from the beginning. It's acceptable to tell the others that you don't know a word for example.

Figure 4
Examples of student responses in e-mail counselling

per module. The initial one is to check on contracts, plans and objectives. The emphasis is on the process – the counsellor will check that the student understands the principles underlying this kind of programme. She will ask questions such as: "What do you understand by autonomy? Have you thought of ways that you might evaluate your

1. **Counsellor:** How do you see yourself now as a language learner? Or have any beliefs about yourself changed? Did you come, or, when you say that you haven't had any experience earlier in speaking English, did you have any problems or beliefs about yourself that have changed now ...?
   Student: Yes. Erm, I was very surprised that I can speak. I have always, er, thought that I couldn't do it, and we had Mary Reid from London, who wanted to see our kindergarten, and my colleagues said no, no, no, not any Marys here, but I promised to, to introduce our kindergarten to her and we have a long discussion of our Finnish day care, yes.
   Counsellor: Marvellous! Very good, you can be proud of yourself.

2. **Counsellor:** Well, is there something that you feel that you have learnt as a learner in a different way than for example before, that you thought, not just language but maybe in some other way during this autumn?
   Student: Well more, probably more active: I mean, I notice everywhere I hear or read or ... something in English language, then I notice it more, or try to get more use of it ...

3. **Counsellor:** What about, if you think of yourself as a language learner, have your beliefs, your ideas about yourself changed at all during, during this programme?
   Student: Yes, I have begun to trust more and more. In our day care centre we have one daddy, papa, he's from Greek, and he is speaking English and he was coming one morning and er, he tried to speak Finnish to me, and I said you can speak English to me, and I was very, er, ama <amazed>, amazing, too, I said so, and after that I started to believe in myself.

Figure 5
Extracts from counselling sessions

progress?" The second, mid-term meeting is to monitor progress. The emphasis is moving towards the product as the student will already be showing the work he/she has done and how it has been evaluated. The third and final meeting is the one at which the student explains what has been achieved and whether his/her objectives have been met. The emphasis here is on the product as the student is expected to have completed the programme.

Let us look in more detail at the mid-term counselling session. What are the kinds of questions that counsellors ask, and what kinds of responses do they get? In practice, this session can also be carried out by e-mail. We give the students a set of questions that they must answer if they use e-mail, and these are generally the same kinds of questions that the counsellor would ask in a face-to-face session. The questions, listed below, can be seen to be aimed at both the process and the product.

1. How are you progressing with your study plan? Explain briefly what you have been doing.
2. Have you made any changes to your original plans?
3. Please give one or two concrete examples of how your English has improved.
4. How have you been evaluating your learning?
5. How do you see yourself now as a language learner? What, if any, changes have you noticed since you started the programme?

Figure 4 gives examples of student responses to these questions. They already show evidence of improvement in students' self-esteem, of self-evaluation, and of changes in beliefs about themselves as learners.

The transcripts made of some of these mid-term meetings provide a second source of data. The meetings were transcribed as part of an ongoing research project into the counselling process. Figure 5 gives three short extracts from these counselling sessions. They show students becoming more conscious of themselves as language learners, taking on a more active role and, as a result, growing in their self-esteem.

Logs

Record keeping is central to the ALMS programme, partly for institutional reasons, but mainly as a tool for the reflection process. The log is used as a record of time spent and work done, but also as a space for evaluating learning and giving comments. Students vary in how they fill in their logs – some go into more detail than others. Some develop their own record-keeping systems or write their own diaries. There is a very good example of a group learning diary in our book *From Here To Autonomy* (pp.103 ff.). In our view, the form of the log is not important: it is the function that matters.

Final self-evaluation

At the end of the module, before our students leave us, we ask them to complete a full questionnaire concerning the programme. We explain that this is mostly for our benefit as we are constantly trying to improve the programme. In addition to asking for their opinion on the organization and the success of all their support groups, we also ask them some questions about their expectations and their feelings at the end of the programme.

In these questionnaires students show clear development in their awareness of the process of language learning. In answer to the question "What does being an autonomous learner mean?", the most frequent responses were "taking responsibility", "being active" and "evaluating oneself".

Finally, let us focus on the issue of change. Does any change occur during the one-term module, and are the students aware of it? Is there evidence of conscious change that could be attributed to the measures taken during the ALMS module? In order to check this we therefore asked two extra questions. These questions were also given in Finnish and the students could answer in Finnish if they wished. We gave this option to be sure that language would not prevent them from expressing rather difficult abstract thoughts about themselves (translations are marked in the figure). The questions were:

1. Did the work that you've done on the ALMS Module match your original contract and fulfil your needs? Why/Why not?
2. Do you feel that your attitudes and beliefs towards learning languages have changed? If so, how?

Figure 6 gives a selection of responses to the two questions. There is ample evidence that the students experience change during the autonomous programme. In particular they talk of increased motivation (e.g., comments 3, 5, 10, 11, 18, 22) and self-confidence (e.g., comments 6, 14, 17). This bears direct relevance to our earlier discussion of "self-esteem" and the importance of its role in learning. Students also show awareness of the difference in this kind of programme – i.e., what is the cause of their change (e.g., comments 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 23, 25). In particular they now see themselves as aware and active learners, able to take advantage of the whole learning environment (e.g., comments 11, 12, 13, 15, 20, 21, 24). There are references to the adoption of new strategies such as careful planning, changing the emotional component,

Question One: Did the work that you've done on the ALMS Module match your original contract and fulfil your needs? Why/Why not?

1. I did exactly as I had written in my contract. Somehow the contract ties me to do the things I have promised. (trans.)
2. My original contract changed a bit – mainly because I came up with more inspiring things to do and I was better able to formulate what would be really useful. (trans.)
3. My studies matched my original plan except that I did much more than I had thought, not because I was "forced" to, but due to the natural need to find things out and extend my studies. For example, I read a lot more than I had planned so that I would have some "content" for the conversations.
4. My plans changed quite a lot because at the beginning I didn't realise the different alternatives there were for learning in a way that was fun. (trans.)
5. I studied more than I had planned because I enjoyed the freedom to plan my own studies. (trans.)

Question Two: Do you feel that your attitudes and beliefs towards learning languages have changed? If so, how?

6. I have perhaps become more sure that I can learn languages by myself. (trans.)
7. My attitude hasn't changed because I didn't have any. (trans)
8. I no longer monitor my speech so neurotically but I dare speak English more freely. (trans.)
9. Learning is an ongoing process which is not limited to the classroom or textbooks. (trans.)
10. I am now more interested in learning languages. (trans.)
11. My attitude towards learning English has become more positive. New ways of learning are already in use. I got so motivated I did twice as much work as necessary for the credits – which was pretty hard work. (trans.)
12. Yes – it's easier to have a positive attitude towards English. Studying has become more careful, more observant. Language development becomes part of life. (trans.)
13. Yes – I became aware of all that English around me. This course waked me up.

14. My attitudes have changed a lot. Before, I was afraid of language study, afraid of making mistakes, which meant I didn't dare use foreign languages. Now I have enjoyed learning new things and am delighted with my progress. I have gained in self-confidence. (trans.)

15. My attitudes at least towards English have changed. At the beginning I was quite confident and didn't see my weaknesses. However this course motivated me to do things, I did many hours of English "homework". Keeping the log was important and motivating. (trans.)

16. No. I knew already before the ALMS module, that the "traditional school-way" of learning languages isn't the best possible. I found even more support for my view from the program.

17. I have had a negative attitude particularly towards learning English, mainly because of failing at school (long ago) where grammar was the whole world. Now I made the discovery (which I knew in theory) that you can learn grammar by reading and listening. And in speech, the main thing is to be understood. (trans.)

18. Yes, they have. Language study needn't be dull and boring but can be liberating and voluntary. And based on one's own interests. University study is adult education which should give more responsibility to the students. The opportunity for this kind of study proves its worth. In this way, language study can be more rewarding, more individual and will meet each person's needs. (trans.)

19. The greatest change after the ALMS course is in attitudes. Before, I was uselessly worried about grammar rules. Now I have learnt to value the fact that I can generally get things across. You don't have to be so stubbornly careful about mistakes and hard on yourself. Of course, changing your attitudes in one term is difficult but I'm well on the way already! (trans.)

20. I have realised the importance of process learning and process writing and I concider myself as a highly independent language learner but a bit lazy as well. I also think my learning in a more self-reflexive way now.

21. I think now I know different ways of learning languages and what things I should consider when I'm learning other languages.

22. I have noticed that even I can learn English. My motivation has grown enormously. (trans.)
23 I hate the "regular" way of studying language and I think that most of the students in university are ready to take responsibility of their own achievements and study this way.
24. This course gave some tools to evaluate how I am learning and how to learn better. Also I should require more from myself when learning other languages.
25. I didn't have any negative concepts about language learning before. But it was strange to find that you can learn in this way. I was used to the fact that you sit on a school bench and cram in grammar and words. (trans.)

Figure 6
Some student responses to the ALMS programme

stressing communication (e.g., comments 1, 2, 4, 14, 15, 17, 21, 24). They also frequently say that they will continue to learn in a different way (e.g., comments 9, 12, 19). This is important, since it is no use if they only behave in this way during this programme. They often express surprise that it can work. On the other hand, quite a few students indicate that they have previously felt something was wrong with the more "traditional" approach (e.g., comments 16, 23). Quite a few students change their plans as they begin to take more control (e.g., comments 2, 3, 4, 5).

Conclusion

We have tried to show that the capacity to take control of one's own learning is a skill that can be nurtured and developed. This is critical if we intend to set up more autonomous language learning programmes. We have set out to refute the oft-quoted claim that "it doesn't work". We believe that "failure" is often because the students are not aware of the basic change in principles. Furthermore, even if they are aware of the new situation, they lack the necessary tools.

It remains clear that students need varying degrees of support to take on their new role. We hope we have shown a few of the ways in which this support can be offered. Again, we have only described our own particular context and we are not proposing that others should follow precisely the same route. As with any system, it needs to be adapted to suit the local circumstances.

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Self-direction in language learning: what does it mean to become aware?

Maria de los Angeles Clemente

Introduction

I work with young adult university students in a self-directed scheme for learning foreign languages at the Self-Access Centre (SAC) at the University of Oaxaca, Mexico. Based on several years of experience, it seems to me that most SAC users do not know how to work in a self-directed way. I have therefore focussed my attention on what I can do to help students in their efforts to engage in self-directed learning.

In 1997, I carried out a project with nine SAC users, the Oaxaca 97 Project (this is fully described in Clemente 1998). One of my goals was to get to know the learners, but my main objective was to enable them to understand more about themselves as learners. In other words, the primary focus of the project was the development of learning awareness.

To explain my interest in learning awareness, let me first introduce a working definition of self-direction. This is based on definitions of autonomy by Holec (1981), Little (1991) and Dickinson (1994), and takes into account the particular context where I work. I define self-direction

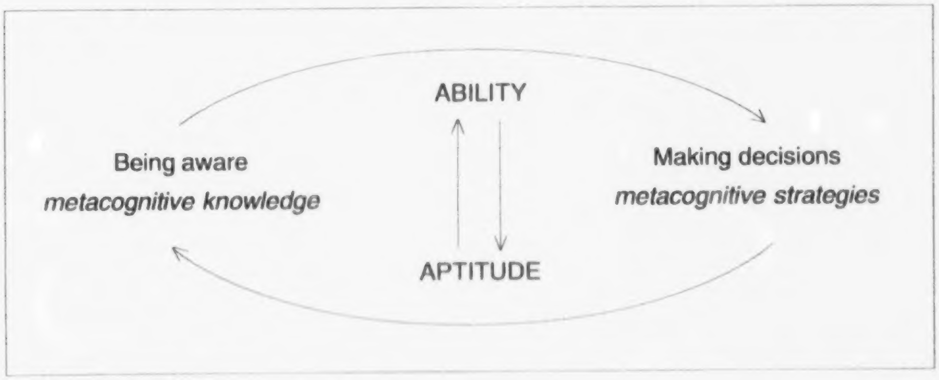


Figure 1
Self-directed learning and its two main processes

as *the intentional and effortful capacity of adults to acquire knowledge and skills by various means*. To work within a self-directed learning scheme implies that the learner has the appropriate attitude to managing learning and the ability to do so. Figure 1 shows how self-direction is understood within this framework.

As can be seen, attitude and ability are related to two mental processes that are at the core of self-direction. These are the processes of *being aware* or *becoming aware*, and of *making decisions*. These processes feed one another in such a way that the more aware a learner is, the better decisions she makes, and this in turn makes her more aware as a learner. Likewise, these processes directly affect the ability and attitude dimensions. By becoming more aware and making better decisions, the learner is able to manage her own learning more effectively. This confidence in her ability to engage in self-directed learning inevitably fosters a positive attitude to the process.

Being aware

As I indicated earlier, my primary interest here is in exploring learning awareness (the concept of *being aware* as illustrated in Figure 1), i.e., what we mean by awareness and how we define metacognitive knowledge. Awareness has been defined in several ways. Van Lier provides a simple definition: the state of "knowing where you are going, what you are doing and why" (1996, p.20). Taking a similar perspective but focussing specifically on language learning, Ridley (1997, p.1) talks about "the ability to stand back occasionally from the learning process [...] and the ability to step back from actual tasks in order to plan, monitor and evaluate [the learner's] own on-the-spot linguistic performance". I especially like these two definitions because their non-complexity makes them manageable for learners, and helps them to understand readily the relevance of awareness to self-directed learning.

As I see it, awareness has a role to play throughout all the stages of the language learning process, its function changing according to these stages. Following the rationale for self-directed learning that underlies this paper, awareness seems to encompass the following: *intention*, *attention*, *awareness of understanding* and *awareness of flawed performance*. Intention, attention and awareness of understanding have been identified by Schmidt (1993) as different connotations of the term "awareness" used by different scholars. According to Schmidt, one has to be very clear about what kind of awareness one means when using this term. In the present context of self-directed learning, awareness includes the three connotations that Schmidt distinguishes. In addition, it includes Johnson's (1996) concept of awareness of flawed performance. Since neither writer has related awareness specifically to self-directed learning, however, let us consider how each of these aspects may be applied to the stages of learning in a self-directed scheme.

First, learning within a self-directed scheme requires the learner to have the *intention* to learn. Intention to learn has been related to the first stages of the cognitive learning process, in particular, the stages of orientation and alertness (Tomlin and Villa 1994). I identify this stage as *being* or *becoming ready* to learn. In other words, having the conscious intention to learn a language is one of the steps in becoming ready. It is important to note that intentionality in self-direction does not deny the possibility of non-intentional learning. After all, incidental learning as the by-product of other types of experiences is a common phenomenon. However, it is clearly the case that self-directed learners cannot afford the luxury of learning "by pure chance".

Second, self-directed learning requires the learner to focus her *attention* on specific elements of the target language. Focusing attention is essential for *noticing*, and hence for turning input into intake. Within a classroom context, it is common for the teacher to help learners to orient their attention to significant linguistic features. In the self-directed learning context, however, the teacher/counsellor does not assign linguistic objectives or decide what the learner is going to study. The responsibility therefore lies with the learner since she selects her own objectives and must learn to focus her attention on the appropriate elements.

When the learner notices a feature of the target language, she starts making hypotheses about the way this particular feature works. In the SLA literature, these processes of hypothesis formation and hypothesis testing have been identified as *structuring* and *restructuring* (McLaughlin 1990, Skehan 1996). It is at this stage that the third dimension of awareness becomes important. Self-directed learners must be *aware of their understanding* in order to decide when their hypotheses are wrong and need to be changed, and when they are right and can be retained and developed into more complex hypotheses.

The fourth type of awareness requires learners to be *aware of their flawed performance*; in other words, "to see for themselves what has gone wrong" (Johnson 1996, p.126), and in the case of self-directed learning especially, to analyse why it has gone wrong. This means that the learner must reflect on her flawed performance and decide whether the problems are caused by lack of linguistic knowledge (resulting in "errors", according to Corder 1981), or lack of procedural knowledge (leading to "mistakes", in Corder's terms). The former will require her to focus attention on the relevant linguistic features and restructure her hypotheses, while the latter will require her to work on practising the language.

One of the main features of awareness in self-directed learning is its constant presence throughout all the stages of the language learning process. This, in fact, is one of the main differences between awareness in this learning context and awareness as represented in SLA in general. In their cognitive model for language learning, for example, Tomlin and Villa (1994) place awareness as an attentional element that is only, and not always, present at the first stages of language learning. Similarly, studies on intention and attention generally focus on these early stages, and suggest that in the latter stages of proceduralization awareness is not necessary. In order for proceduralization to take place, it is of course true that some types of awareness (attention and awareness of understanding) need to be minimized (Bialystok 1994, p.158). Nevertheless, it is surely the case that intention and awareness of flawed performance continue to play a role, though perhaps to a lesser degree, within the metacognitive system of the language learner–user. As Little (1997, p.228) reminds us, "all language users, native as well as non-native speakers, remain language learners for as long as they are involved with the language in question". In other words, language users remain language learners in the sense that their intention remains open to learn more and to correct their mistakes in order to improve their performance. This explains why learner–users continue to work on their language. As common experience shows, any learner who wants to gain proficiency in the target language becomes self-directed in the advanced stages of learning.

Let me now return to the Oaxaca 97 Project. Having taken on board the concept of awareness as well as the assumption that self-directed language learners needed to think in a reflective manner (Ridley 1997), I decided to work with the learners in the project group so that they might develop the four different kinds of awareness described above. I carried out several counselling sessions before and after their work in the SAC in order to make them reflect on the various elements in-

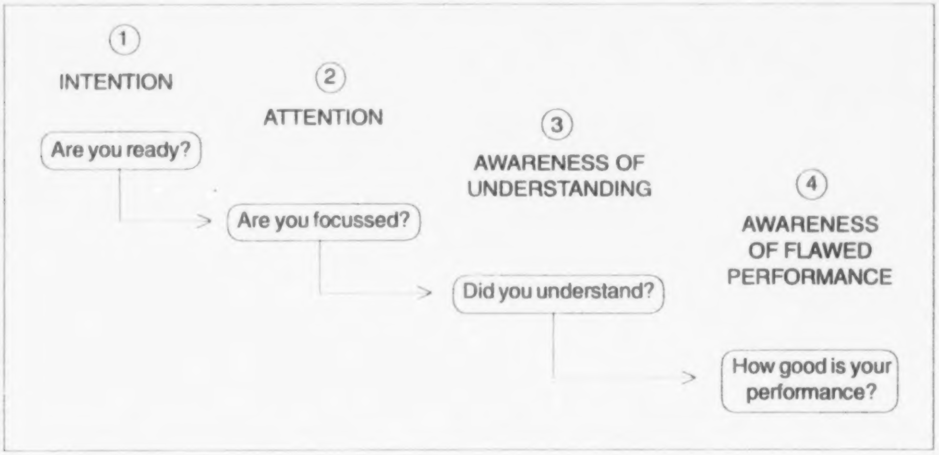

1
INTENTION
Are you ready?
2
ATTENTION
Are you focussed?
3
AWARENESS OF UNDERSTANDING
Did you understand?
4
AWARENESS OF FLAWED PERFORMANCE
How good is your performance?

Figure 2
Reflection on the four areas of awareness

volved in these four areas of awareness. Figure 2 illustrates this reflective stage. The question in each of the four areas represents the particular topic of the counselling session

As it emerged, however, the outcomes of these sessions were not what I had expected. I had thought that they would elicit information about precisely how learners were making decisions, i.e., information on "second order beliefs" (see later discussion) about language learning (Riley 1996, p.21) from which I could draw conclusions about how each learner was managing the learning process. What I got instead were vague and incomplete statements and clichéd answers. For example, I asked the students about their readiness to learn the target language – that is, whether they were ready to learn a specific aspect of it. All responded that they were ready to learn the language, their answers expressing positive attitudes of the kind "I really want to learn English, so here I am, ready to learn it!" Clearly, such replies said much about the high motivation of students who begin working in the SAC. However, the responses also betrayed the fact that there was much information the learners did not provide, simply because they did not know what to be aware of.

Aware of what?

If we return to Figure 1, we can see that the process of being aware is related to what is called metacognitive knowledge. In other words, awareness in learning means being aware of metacognitive knowledge. Flavell (1979, p.906) defines metacognitive knowledge as "that segment of your stored world knowledge that has to do with people as cognitive creatures, and with their diverse cognitive tasks, goals, actions and experiences". As the reader will no doubt agree, it is not easy in these terms to decide what is metacognitive knowledge and what is not. The problem does not seem to stem from the definition itself, but arises because of the very nature of the cognitive process in question: learning. Almost everything we know is related to our capacity for learning, since it is through learning that we acquire all knowledge.

In an attempt to make his concept more manageable, Flavell identifies three different categories of metacognitive knowledge: person, task and strategy. The first category, *person*, refers to cognitive and affective beliefs which are related to the cognitive dimension of human beings. The second category, *task*, refers to the nature of the information to be cognitively processed, and the task that this cognitive work involves. Finally, *strategy* relates to the knowledge that we as cognitive beings possess about the way we carry out the cognitive task. Where language learning is concerned, *person* refers to the knowledge one has about oneself as a language learner and about other people who are present in one's own learning domain (as educators or fellow learners). *Task* is

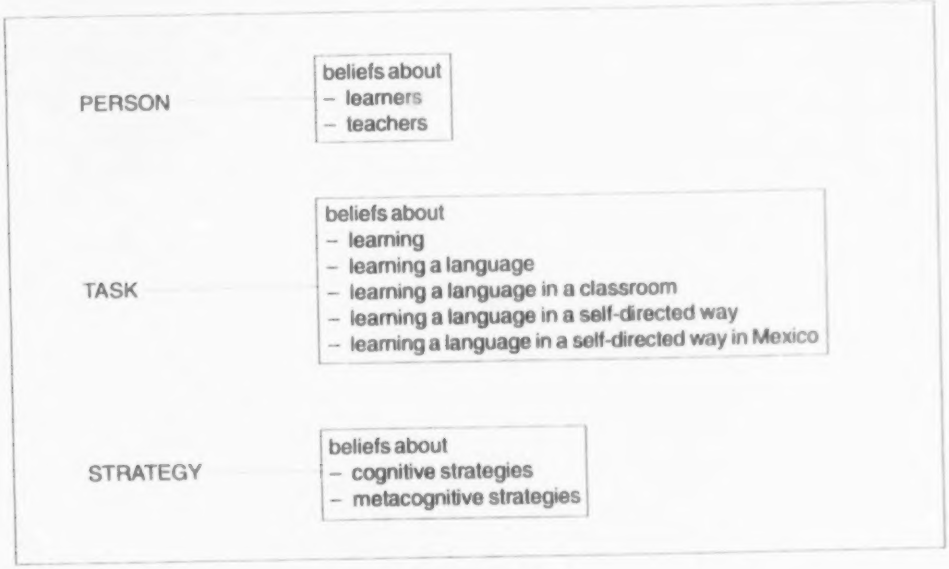

PERSON
beliefs about
– learners
– teachers
TASK
beliefs about
– learning
– learning a language
– learning a language in a classroom
– learning a language in a self-directed way
– learning a language in a self-directed way in Mexico
STRATEGY
beliefs about
– cognitive strategies
– metacognitive strategies

Figure 3
Three categories of learners' beliefs in the Oaxaca 97 project

knowledge about learning as a general cognitive activity, and the specific features that learning a foreign language entails. *Strategy* refers to knowledge of the learning strategies that the learner chooses (or does not choose) for learning a language, and the rationale underlying this process of selection (Cotterall 1995, p.201). In my view, these three categories of metacognitive knowledge are interrelated and interdependent. All of them in their own way can enhance the processes of intention, attention, awareness of understanding and awareness of flawed performance. Figure 3 applies Flavell's tripartite concept of metacognitive knowledge to summarize the beliefs of the learners in the Oaxaca 97 Project.

How to become aware

With reference again to Flavell's work, let me here introduce the term *metacognitive experience*. For Flavell, metacognitive experiences are "any conscious cognitive or affective experiences that accompany and pertain to any intellectual enterprise" (Flavell 1979, p.906). With this concept in mind, I got the learners to involve themselves in activities that made them reflect on themselves as learners (*person*), reflect on their learning processes (*task*), and reflect on the way they were carrying these out (*strategy*). These experiences can be clustered as shown in Figure 4.

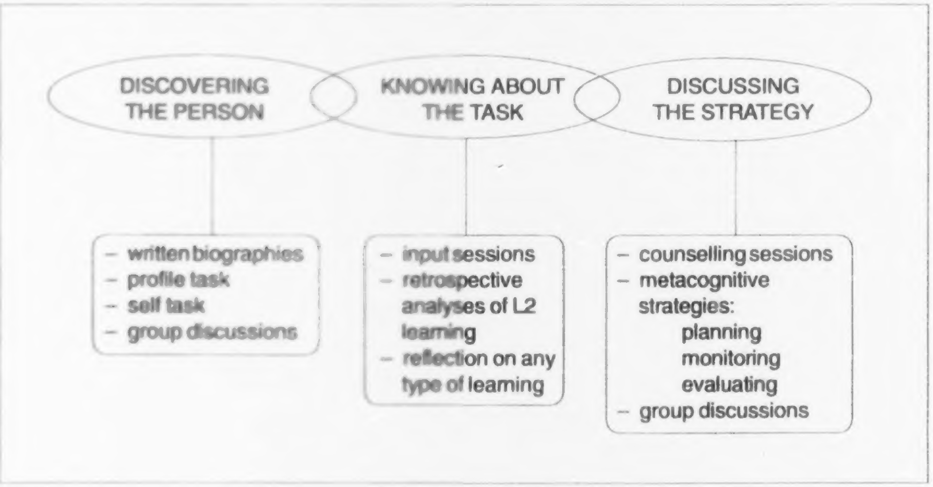

DISCOVERING THE PERSON
KNOWING ABOUT THE TASK
DISCUSSING THE STRATEGY
– written biographies
– profile task
– self task
– group discussions
– input sessions
– retrospective analyses of L2 learning
– reflection on any type of learning
– counselling sessions
– metacognitive strategies:
planning
monitoring
evaluating
– group discussions

Figure 4
Metacognitive experiences in the Oaxaca 97 project

In differing degrees according to how learners applied themselves, the activities triggered conscious awareness of metacognitive knowledge in one or other of the three categories. It is also my belief that they gave rise to unconscious awareness in the other two categories. For example, a learner who was engaged in reflecting about her learning strategies (the *strategy* dimension of metacognitive knowledge) was at the same time learning more about herself as a learner (discovering the *person*).

Space does not permit a detailed description of each of the awareness-raising activities that were carried out during the Oaxaca 97 Project, but I hope that one example may serve to show how learners engaged in metacognitive experiences and what the outcomes were.

The self task: an example of metacognitive experience

The self task (adapted from Barrow 1986, p.304) consisted of two main activities: answering a task sheet (see Appendix 1) and analysing the answers with the whole learner group. During the self task, the learners had to reflect on themselves according to three different perspectives (Figure 5). First, they analysed how they saw themselves as being (the perceived self, indicated by the left-hand circle in Figure 5), in comparison with how they felt they would like to be (the ideal self, indicated by the right-hand circle). Next, they tried to determine which

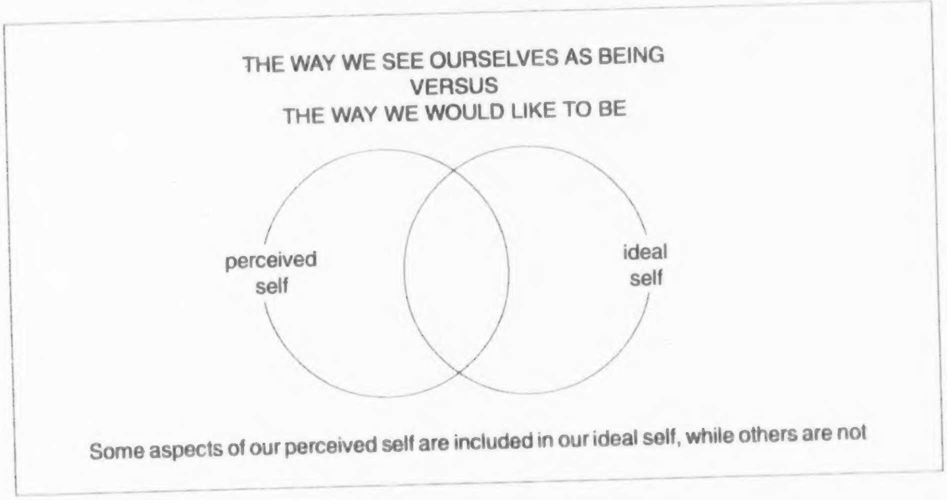

THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES AS BEING
VERSUS
THE WAY WE WOULD LIKE TO BE
perceived self
ideal self
Some aspects of our perceived self are included in our ideal self, while others are not

Figure 5
The two circles of the self

elements of the perceived self were also part of the ideal self; in other words, which aspects of themselves they were happy with and classified as positive (represented by the intersection of the two circles in Figure 5).

This reflective activity produced three lists of personal features. For the perceived self, for example, some of the answers were as follows:

I am a bit lazy
I don't work at 100% of my capacity
Sometimes I do not understand oral language
I am forgetful
I am short

The ideal self was generally convergent with the perceived self. Notice, for example, how three participants correlate their beliefs:

Perceived self	**Ideal self**
1. I am a bit lazy	1. I have to commit myself
2. Sometimes I do not understand oral language	2. Don't get frustrated when I don't understand language
3. I am shy	3. Accept myself the way I am

Many learning-to-learn tasks that I have come across seem to be conducted as individual tasks. While there is an advantage to this approach in terms of privacy, there are many more positive benefits to be gained from working in a group, as researchers interested in autonomy have highlighted (e.g., Voller 1997, Little 1998). In this respect, the participants in the Oaxaca 97 Project were especially pleased with the introduction of group work in the SAC context. Here I should like to highlight one particularly positive aspect of group work: making explicit through sharing the process of analysing responses and uncovering the reasons underlying them. These reasons constitute beliefs about beliefs, or as Marton (1981) calls them, "second order beliefs". Based on Marton's concept of second order beliefs, Freeman states that the purpose of second order research is to "uncover and document [people's] understandings [of phenomena] and not the phenomena themselves" (Freeman 1996, p.365). To put it in a different way, this type of research focuses not on the world or on behaviour or facts, but on people's ideas about the world. In my view, this research perspective seemed to fit perfectly my own goal of exploring learners' metacognitive knowledge. The group activity of the self task I carried out was effectively a second order research tool that enabled learners to discover some aspects of their metacognitive knowledge. Let me give a brief illustration of what I mean.

In describing her perceived self, participant E wrote on her task sheet that she saw herself as a short person (a first order belief). My interpretation of this response was that she had actually misunderstood the task and failed to realize that it was meant to be related to experiences about learning languages. However, when she shared her answer with the group I learned that I was wrong. This was the reason she gave for her belief (a second order belief) that height affected her language learning: "I feel very short, and when I am in a class, or interacting in a group of foreigners, I am very aware that everybody else is taller than me, so I feel 'little' and I feel that taller people say more important things."

From a more general perspective, this awareness-raising activity enabled learners to gain some metacognitive knowledge of the *person* category. Comparing learners' various approaches to the task, some seemed to put more emphasis on one or two of the three "selves", and some expressed difficulty in finding elements for a particular self. All in all, five different tendencies emerged among the learner group. The

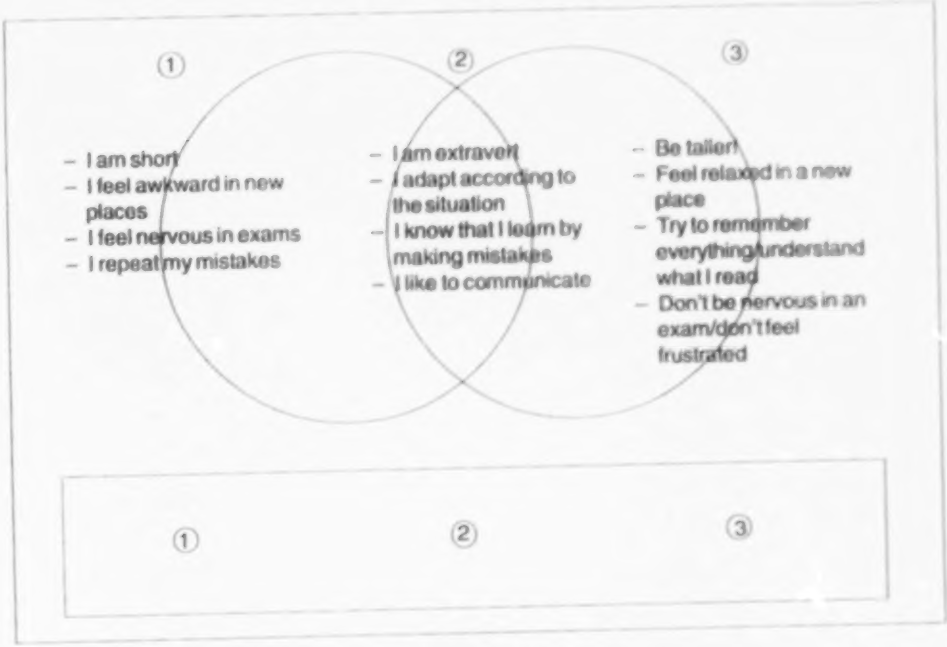

①
②
③
– I am short
– I feel awkward in new places
– I feel nervous in exams
– I repeat my mistakes
– I am extravert
– I adapt according to the situation
– I know that I learn by making mistakes
– I like to communicate
– Be taller!
– Feel relaxed in a new place
– Try to remember everything/understand what I read
– Don't be nervous in an exam/don't feel frustrated
①
②
③

Figure 6
Learner A according to her self lists

first is represented by participant A. Her account of her selves was very even, with all three lists of features similar in length. In addition, she had a lot to say about herself. Figure 6 offers a diagrammatic representation of her reflections. Although Figure 6 may not reveal a lot in itself, comparison with the figures that follow will quickly show some important differences.

Learner B did not have problems when compiling the lists of features. However, most of the information he supplied tended to relate to his perceived self, a fact that he was very much aware of and indeed commented on ("I am more aware of my shortcomings than of my ideal self"). Figure 7 illustrates his reflections.

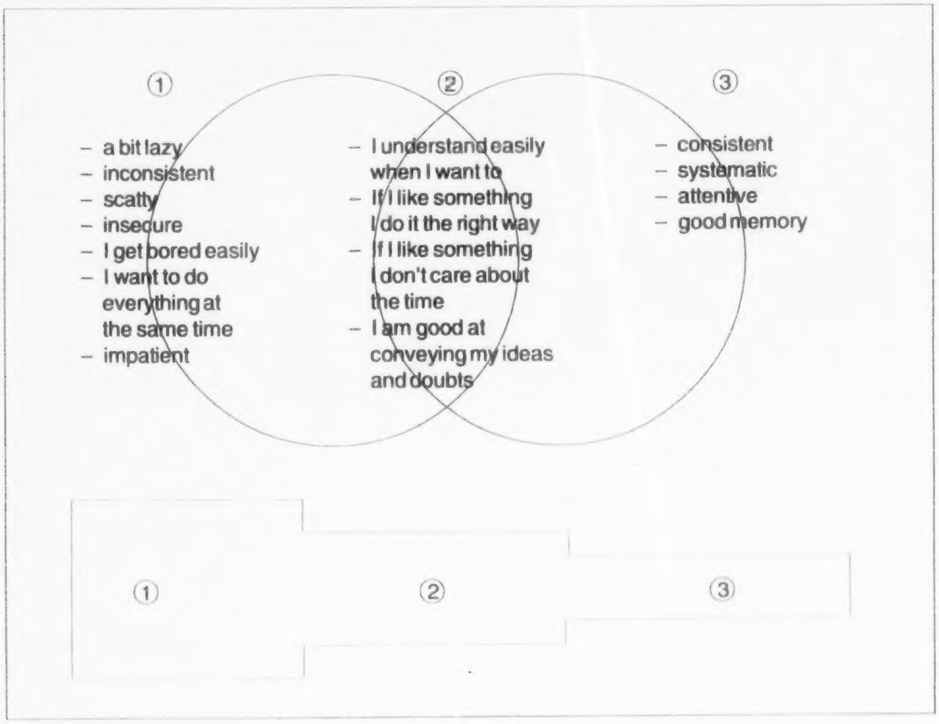
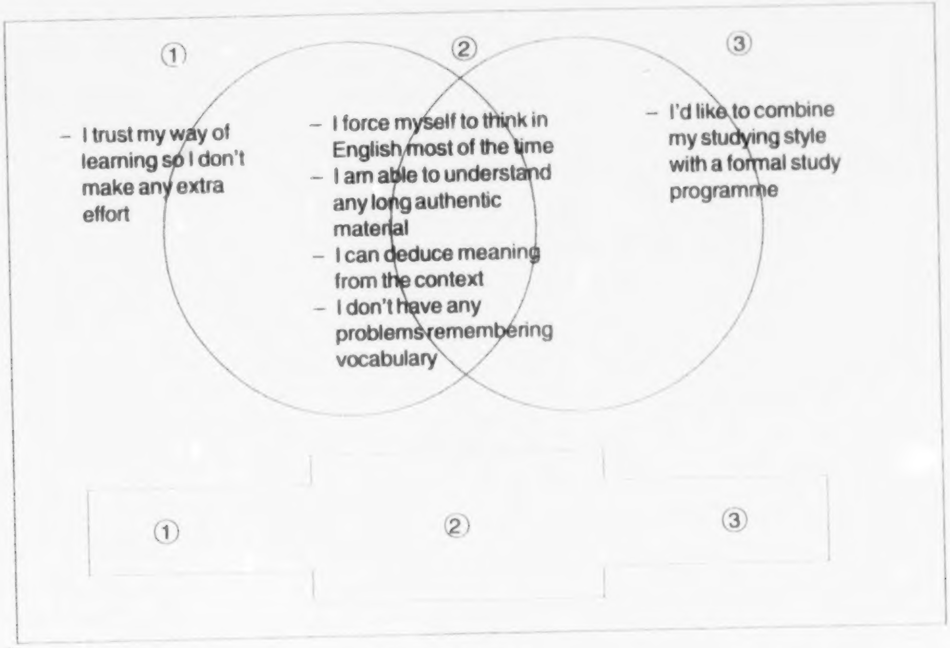

①
②
③
– a bit lazy
– inconsistent
– scatty
– insecure
– I get bored easily
– I want to do everything at the same time
– impatient
– I understand easily when I want to
– If I like something I do it the right way
– If I like something I don't care about the time
– I am good at conveying my ideas and doubts
– consistent
– systematic
– attentive
– good memory
①
②
③

Figure 7
Learner B according to his self lists

Learner C showed that he was also self-aware, but he put more emphasis on the middle section, suggesting that he was very satisfied with his learning (Figure 8):

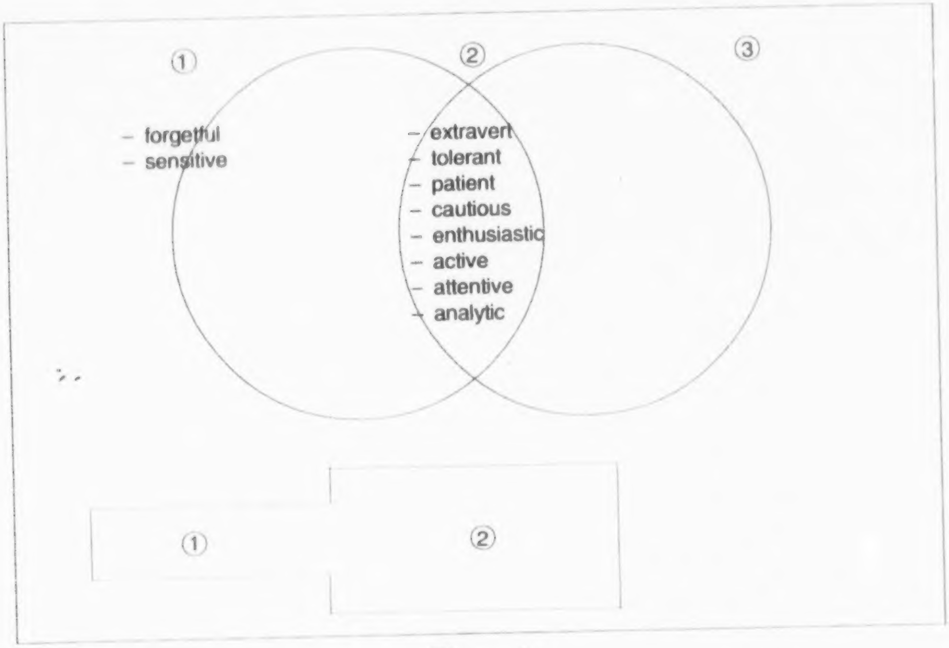


- I trust my way of learning so I don't make any extra effort

- I force myself to think in English most of the time
- I am able to understand any long authentic material
- I can deduce meaning from the context
- I don't have any problems remembering vocabulary

- I'd like to combine my studying style with a formal study programme

Figure 8
Learner C according to his self lists



- forgetful
- sensitive

- extravert
- tolerant
- patient
- cautious
- enthusiastic
- active
- attentive
- analytic

Figure 9
Learner D according to her self lists

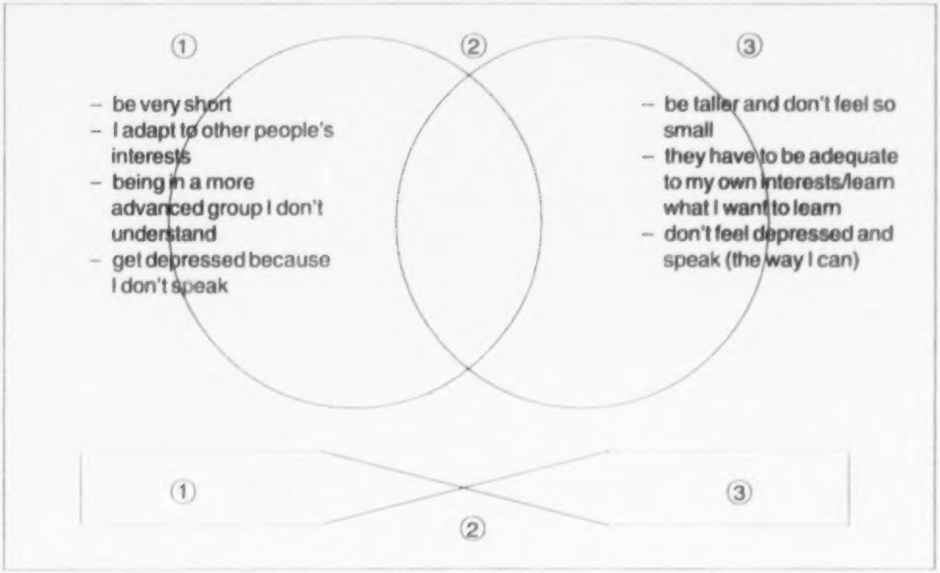

①
②
③
– be very short
– I adapt to other people's interests
– being in a more advanced group I don't understand
– get depressed because I don't speak
– be taller and don't feel so small
– they have to be adequate to my own interests/learn what I want to learn
– don't feel depressed and speak (the way I can)
①
②
③

Figure 10
Learner E according to her self lists

Learner D likewise seemed satisfied with herself to the extent that she could find no features belonging to the ideal self (Figure 9).

Learner E displayed a similarly extreme set of reflections but one completely opposite to that of learner D. She was so self-critical about her performance and learning that she was unable to identify a single feature in the area of convergence between the perceived and ideal selves. In short, there seemed to be nothing in her perceived self that she was happy with. Her reflections (Figure 10) thus contrast sharply with those of the other participants.

For some of the learners, it soon became apparent that the process of working with these issues strengthened their metacognitive knowledge. Learner A expressed it thus: "I became aware that I have to work more on my self-confidence and also that I already have some tools to work with, my extroverted nature, for instance"; while learner B gave the following insight: "I became aware that it doesn't seem to be very difficult to change my negative attributes of my perceived self. I have to work hard but they are not unreachable."

One finding to emerge was that the outcomes of this awareness-raising activity clearly reflected the performance levels of the participants as language learners. Successful language learners (C and D) demonstrated their self-confidence in the manner in which they completed the task, while those who were less successful or less experienced as language learners (B and E) produced diagrams that mirrored their lack of confidence. The case of learner A is interesting in this regard. Her balanced set of perceptions seems to derive from her reflection on the process of becoming aware that she has experienced. In other words, she has developed from being a non-aware learner lacking in self-direction to becoming an assertive self-directed learner. Current observation suggests that she tends to be a realistic learner who still judges herself very hard.

After they had completed the task and reflected on the outcomes, it was clear that some learners were not quite ready, at least in relation to this aspect of *person*, to embark on self-directed learning of the language. It is my belief that metacognitive experiences such as those generated by the self task can help learners (and their teachers or counsellors) to become aware of their perceptions. Such awareness, in turn, enhances their motivation. According to Ushioda (1996, p.55), "What learners believe about themselves is crucially important to their capacity for self-motivation"; or, to put it in Ridley's (1997, p.15) words: "In many cases, a lack of self-confidence is associated not only with lack of ability but also with negative self-perceptions, which give rise to poor motivation and low levels of effort."

Conclusion

To summarize: this paper has argued that it is necessary for learners to explore their own metacognitive knowledge (*person*, *task* and *strategy*), in order to develop the different types of awareness relevant in particular to self-directed language learning (intention, attention, awareness of understanding, awareness of flawed performance). As the paper has shown, it is not enough simply to ask learners about their learning processes. Learners need to know *what* to be aware of and *how* to become aware. Specifically, learners need to be aware of their metacognitive knowledge, and the way to achieve this is through metacognitive experiences that deal with second order belief systems. The self task described in this paper exemplified a way in which we as educators involved in self-directed learning schemes can help to enhance students' learning processes, and equally become better acquainted ourselves with these processes. This, I believe, is an essential responsibility for those of us working in self-directed learning schemes.

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Appendix 1

The self task

Discovering the person and working on self-confidence (adapted from Barrow 1986)

1. Briefly describe situations that threaten your self-confidence.

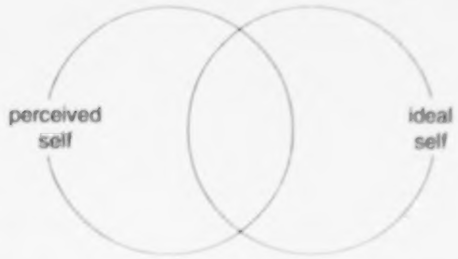
2. Categories of the self.

   Our self can be described using four different categories
   (a) physical self
   (b) social adequacy
   (c) intellectual competency
   (d) emotional functioning

   Classify the situations you described in answer to 1 according to these categories.

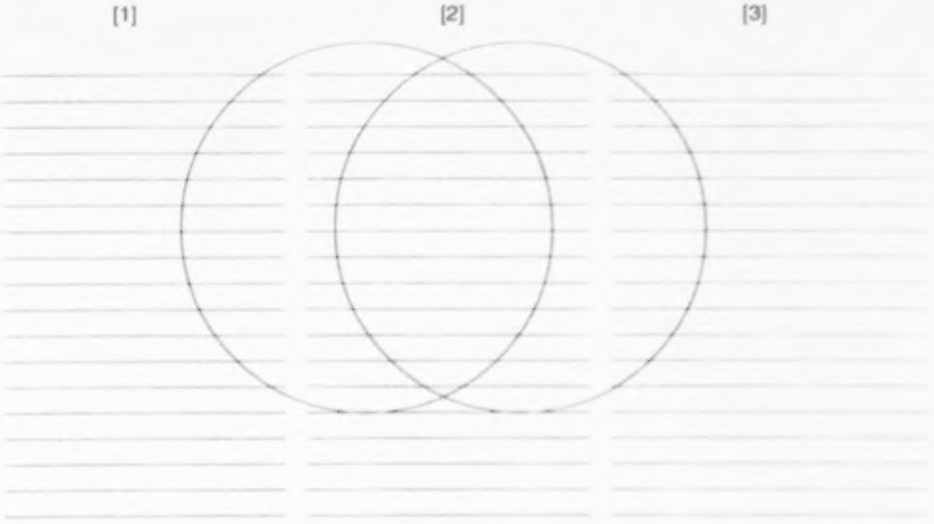
3. The two circles of the self.

THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES AS BEING
VERSUS
THE WAY WE WOULD LIKE TO BE



Some aspects of our perceived self are included in our ideal self, while others are not

4. Describe aspects of your language learning experience which reveal (i) your perceived self but not your ideal self, (ii) both selves, and (iii) your ideal self but not your perceived self.



5. What can you do to improve the congruence of your perceived self with your ideal self?

Part IV

Teachers and teacher training

A shift of pedagogical focus from teaching to learning carries implications not only for what happens in classrooms but for how we design and implement programmes of teacher education and development. The papers in this part of the book address three distinct aspects of this problem.

Lucie Betáková identifies target language use as a key factor in successful language learning: learners will become proficient in the target language only to the extent that they are given frequent opportunities to use it for genuine communicative purposes. But when it comes to using the target language as the principal medium of teaching and learning, non-native-speaker teachers are likely to feel themselves at a disadvantage. Lucie Betáková reports on a survey she conducted that took this issue as its starting point. She found that although the teachers she worked with believed in communicative language teaching, they made less use of the target language than they should because of their low language proficiency. From this she concludes that language teacher training must concern itself with teachers' target language proficiency as well as with the development of their pedagogical skills.

Jette Lentz's paper is based on a social-interactive view of learning that recalls the theoretical and practical perspectives elaborated in the first two parts of the book. It argues that current demands for pedagogical change in Denmark require teachers to concern themselves much more than previously with processes of interaction and dialogue. Drawing on the interpersonal theories of Donald Winnicott and Daniel Stern to elaborate an approach to the development of teachers' interpersonal and communication skills, Jette Lentz proposes that in-service courses for teachers should employ the same techniques as teachers are expected to use in their own classrooms.

José Luis Vera is also concerned that teacher training programmes should embody the same pedagogical values and procedures as we expect teachers to observe and follow in their classrooms: he reports on a project designed to involve trainee teachers in the teaching/learning process through the development of phases and degrees of autonomy. Inevitably the techniques he describes have much in common with the reflective procedures that are central to the argument of so many other papers in the book. His account tends to reinforce the view that only teachers who have themselves experienced a conscious growth of autonomy in learning will be adequately equipped to promote the development of autonomy in their own classrooms.

The importance of using the target language in the classroom

Lucie Betáková

Introduction

The question that has become centrally important for all teachers of second or foreign languages is: "How do people learn languages and how can they be supported in this process?" In other words, learning, rather than teaching, has become the crucial concept in foreign and second language development. Stern, for example, puts it thus: "[...] in the model of language learning the learning process has been placed symbolically in the centre of the diagram". His diagram also includes social context, learner characteristics, learning conditions and learning outcomes. He continues: "Teaching methods make more or less clearly formulated assumptions about the learning process" (Stern 1983, p.394).

Learning, however, seems a difficult concept to define. Krashen, for example, makes a distinction between "acquisition" and "learning" where acquisition is "a subconscious process that is identical to the process used in first language acquisition in all important ways. While acquisition is taking place, the acquirer is not always aware of it, and he or she is not usually aware of its results" (Krashen 1989, p.8). Learning, on the other hand, is "conscious knowledge" or "knowing about" language. In everyday terms, when we talk about grammar or rules we are referring to learning, not acquisition. Such a distinction seems to imply that formal educational contexts offer opportunities mainly for learning, while acquisition is what happens in target language environments. Stern, however, suggests otherwise: "Nonetheless, learning may also take place in the target language setting, and acquisition in the classroom" (1983, p.392). He adds: "Ideally, of course, the natural language setting and the educational treatment should complement each other" (ibid., p.393). On the other hand, Brown (1987) defines learning as acquisition, or the getting or retention of information or skill. Viewed thus, the term seems to comprise the senses of both learning and acquisition in Krashen's terminology.

My own belief is that it is not necessary to work with a clear-cut distinction between learning and acquisition, since what primarily concerns us here at this conference is the distinction between learning and teaching. We are interested in how learners develop their second or foreign language ability, either by learning or by acquisition, and in how we, as teachers, can support this process. Nevertheless, the terminological debate is useful in that it draws attention to the importance of implicit as well as explicit learning processes in the mastery of a foreign language. In this respect, the present paper focuses in particular on the need for teachers to give support to the implicit learning processes or natural processes of acquisition that seem especially crucial with young learners.

Learning

What do we know about how people learn languages? We know that a child learns its mother tongue in the process of socialization. Learning in general takes place in a social context through interaction with other people. Williams and Burden, for example, see interaction as the key to learning, one which is especially apparent in the case of learning a language:

> [...] where using language is essentially a social activity, and interaction in the target language is an integral part of the learning process. Teachers need to be particularly aware of the impact of the interactions that occur in the classroom. These interactions can foster a sense of belonging, they enhance sharing behaviour, they can encourage personal control and foster positive attributions. Particularly, the nature of the interaction in the target language will influence the quality of learning that language. (1997, p.206)

Ellis (1988) additionally points out that interaction in the target language plays a key role in the *rate* of second language development (SLD), as it provides learners with ready-made chunks of language which can be incorporated into their utterances. He further argues that interaction contributes to second language development because it is

> the means by which the learner is able to crack the code. This takes place when the learner can infer what is said even though the message contains linguistic items that are not yet part of his competence and when the learner can use the discourse to help him modify or supplement the linguistic knowledge he has already used in production.

> When a learner is interacting naturally with a fully competent speaker (or even another learner) he is trying to use language to accomplish actions. Linguistic knowledge , therefore, is a by-product of communicative competence. (Ellis 1988, p.95)

Brumfit (1984) suggests that students should be given plenty of opportunities for naturalistic language use to develop their fluency. Students need two types of support in this regard: access to "tokens" of the target language, and provision of appropriate material which should operate as optimal input and needs to be comprehensible, interesting, relevant and appropriate. According to Brumfit, the aim of fluency activities is

> to develop a pattern of language interaction within the classroom which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in mother tongue in a normal life. Since much language use is informal, small group conversation, this will often involve students in participating in small groups. (1984, p.69)

Ellis (1988) also believes that learners need the opportunity of participating in the same kinds of interactions as naturalistic learners in order to develop "communicative speech". Raising the question to what extent the classroom constitutes a different linguistic environment, he examines the nature of the input provided by the teacher and the kinds of interaction which are typically found in the classroom. His finding is that teacher-talk involves many of the same kinds of adjustments as foreigner talk:

> It might be hypothesised, then, that these adjustments facilitate SLD in the classroom in much the same way as foreigner-talk adjustments are hypothesised to facilitate SLD in naturalistic settings. From the point of view of teacher-talk, therefore, the linguistic environment provided by the classroom is not so different from that found outside. In Krashen's terms there is likely to be plenty of "comprehensible input" even in the language classroom where the focus of teaching is on form. (1988, p.97)

According to Krashen (1989), obtaining comprehensible input is the only way of acquiring the language. He claims that providing comprehensible input may be surprisingly easy, since all the teacher needs to do is make sure that students understand what is being said or what they are reading. This approach, however, is criticized by Widdowson (1990), who points out that the learner cannot be merely a passive recipient but must be actively involved in the process of manipulating the input so that it becomes optimally comprehensible. In interactions between native and non-native speakers, both participants collaborate by employing strategies for negotiating meaning. In this respect, the learner must exercise his/her own initiative in order to ensure the proper supply of comprehensible input.

Widdowson suggests therefore that the learning process should allow for learner initiatives. It should give the learner scope for drawing on personal resources of intuition and inventiveness, and for freely engaging the learning procedures already acquired through previous experience. Moreover, there should be an interactional relationship between the teacher and the learner.

Ellis stresses that a competency for participating in informal interaction is more likely to develop from exposure than from instruction. The issue of central importance is the choice of interactive goals: "Activity-oriented and social goals are more likely to aid the development of primary processes than message-oriented goals" (1988, p.211). He also emphasizes the importance of unplanned discourse in the classroom. Learning, he believes, can take place very successfully when learners simply participate in spontaneous interaction, even in the initial stages of learning a language. After all, ordinary conversation is the most natural type of discourse, yet it happens very rarely in the classroom. An informal approach whereby teacher and pupils share reciprocal discourse roles can do much to promote learning. The key facilitating factor here is the opportunity afforded to the learner to negotiate meaning with an interlocutor, preferably one who has more linguistic resources. It is through negotiation that the learner is able to make use of the various personal resources that underpin successful participation in unplanned discourse. Another important skill which I believe very strongly to be essential to the enhancement of learning is observation. The learner needs to be able to "observe" the language input provided. According to Stern (1992), observation entails careful listening, reading and watching.

Ultimately, of course, it is clear that successful language learners rely not only on language input and learning opportunities in the classroom, but also on their own efforts to make contact with speakers of the language in the world outside. As Stern writes:

> There is ample evidence that language learning cannot be accomplished through formal study and practice alone. The learner must seek opportu-

> nities for language use in real-life situations. Whether he reads whatever interests him, listens to the radio, watches films or engages other people in conversation, the important thing is that he must seek opportunities for unrehearsed, authentic use of language. (1992, p.264)

In the following parts of the paper, I will examine what implications the learning process has for the teaching process, the role of the teacher in the classroom, the teacher's own language development, and teacher development.

Teaching

According to Brown, we can define teaching only in relation to learning: "Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning" (1987, p.7). Our understanding of how the learner learns will determine our philosophy of education, our teaching style, methods and classroom techniques. For example, if we view second language learning as basically a deductive rather than an inductive process, we will then choose to present copious rules and paradigms to our pupils rather than let them discover those rules inductively.

Brumfit (1984) points out that teaching must be compatible with our understanding of the nature of language, the processes of language acquisition or learning, and the social and psychological characteristics of teachers and learners. However, Stern (1992) adds that our views of teaching are not only shaped by current concepts of learning, language and society but also influenced by educational tradition. In my experience, the problem is that teachers very often do not have access to or much knowledge about current theory and concepts of learning. The expectations of what the teacher should do and what the learners should do in the classroom are considered to be very stable. They are not to be questioned, and are more or less "prescribed" by the educational tradition of the particular country.

In short, there seems to be a need for greater teacher awareness of learning and acquisition processes, if such awareness is to be appropriately reflected in effective teaching practice. The preceding discussion of learning attempted to highlight some of the relevant theoretical issues. Here I will briefly summarize their implications for what teachers need to do to support the learning process.

1. The teacher should ensure that learners have ample opportunities of engaging in target language interaction with their peers and the teacher. The teacher should make occasion for unplanned discourse where learners have the chance to negotiate meaning.
2. The teacher should provide as much comprehensible input as possible, but also supply additional sources of target language input for both listening and reading. In other words the learners should have access to authentic materials.
3. The teacher should ensure the active involvement of the learners. There should be scope for learner initiative, and learners should be given a chance to learn from each other especially through group work.
4. Teaching should be activity-oriented.
5. Learners should be trained to become independent of the teacher. They should be taught how to use their language resources in real-life communication, and how to work with the language input they can get outside the classroom.

The role of the teacher

In order to promote learning, the teacher must act not only as an instructor but also as a facilitator of learning, and may need to perform a variety of specific roles. For example, "he will sometimes wish to participate in an activity as 'communicator' with the learners. In this role, he can stimulate and present new language, without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves" (Littlewood 1981, p.93). This point is further elaborated by Brumfit:

> Learning will be dependent partly on the teacher's ability to stop teaching and become simply one among a number of communicators in the classroom. Without such an ability, teachers will prevent their learners from ever having the opportunity to convert tokens that have been formally "learnt" into communicative systems that have been acquired. (1984, p.60)

Ellis (1988) argues that the teacher should ideally act as a learning partner, simply providing samples of target language and offering guidance, in much the same way that the mother acts as a supportive discourse partner for her child. In many classrooms, of course, it may not be feasible for the teacher to adopt this kind of partnership role. What is important, nevertheless, is that the teacher allows the pupils to take the lead and then adjusts his own discourse contributions to provide an appropriate level of input. It is by no means easy to achieve this, and at the same time maintain order in the classroom interaction. For this reason, the partnership role is best fulfilled in teacher-learner and teacher-group interactions rather than in interactions with the whole class.

Teacher knowledge

What does the teacher need to know about learning and teaching in order to be a good teacher and to promote learning? According to Brown (1987), teachers should have an understanding of acquisition processes, memory systems, conscious and subconscious learning styles and strategies, theories of forgetting, reinforcement and the role of practice. They should be aware of the difference between inductive and deductive learning processes, and know which are likely to be more beneficial for their learners in a particular situation. In this regard, Stern makes the following assertion:

> Educationally, the inductive sequence is probably to be preferred because it encourages language learners to start out from their own observations and to discover the principle or rule for themselves. (1992, p.150)

According to Brown (1987), however, classroom learning tends to rely more than it should on deductive reasoning. Stern opts for a balanced approach, arguing that a teaching programme should encourage both an explicit focus on grammatical forms and the intuitive acquisition of these forms through use in real-life contexts. On the basis of their own experience, teachers should decide for themselves to what extent conscious learning can be helpful. In doing so, they should bear in mind various learner factors, especially learning style, age, proficiency level and educational background.

Classroom language

From what we know about the language learning process, and consequently about the role of the teacher in enhancing this process, it is of course self-evident that teachers need to conduct their lessons through the target language as much as possible. The main concern of this paper is the question of maximizing the use of the target language in the classroom.

As Stern reminds us, it has been widely recognized since the early days of the direct method that conducting the lesson through the target language helps to create a second language "ambience" in the classroom, and an opportunity for authentic communication: "Where much of the classroom management takes place in the second language, this undoubtedly offers the student a regular opportunity for communication in the target language" (Stern 1992, p.189). Krashen similarly underlines the importance of exposing learners to as much target language input in the classroom as possible: "The advantages of the input-rich classroom are obvious. The classroom, in most cases, is practically the only source of comprehensible input in the target language" (1995, p.179).

In Krashen's view, exposure to comprehensible input feeds unconscious acquisition processes in all learners: "Comprehensible input will be the crucial element of a language teaching program for all students, young and old. While some second language students may be learners, everyone is an acquirer" (1995, p.56). Where young learners are concerned in particular, these unconscious acquisition processes seem to play an especially important role. Even teachers who do not believe in the distinction between learning and acquisition will agree that the most effective means of achieving our communicative language teaching aims is to conduct the lesson through the target language. According to Mothejzíková (1992), teaching through the target language offers an ideal opportunity of presenting and using the language naturally and spontaneously in authentic situations which do not have to be prepared and simulated. Teachers should make the most of these naturally arising situations to promote their learners' unconscious acquisition processes, in addition to focusing on explicit learning processes through the presentation and practice of pedagogically prepared material. In short, priority should be given to conducting the lesson through the target language, a point that is similarly emphasized by Willis (1981), who highlights the importance of establishing the target language as the main medium of communication in the classroom.

Non-native speaker teachers

In order to be able to exploit natural classroom interaction to its full potential, the teacher must of course be linguistically prepared. In our situation in the Czech Republic as in most European countries, teachers of English are generally non-native speakers. This is true especially at primary level. In many ways, therefore, they are in a more difficult position than native-speaker teachers (see Medgyes 1994). Their main problem is that they need to have the same level of teaching skills as their native-speaker counterparts, and at the same time perform teacher-talking activities in a language which is not their mother tongue. Compared to the days when the grammar-translation method was used, the communicative approach and the newly introduced textbooks, together with the changing demands of society, now require teachers to have a much higher level of language proficiency. At least, this is true in our country. I can illustrate this with a quotation from Cullen (1994, pp.164f.), who compares the situation in Poland with that of other countries he has worked in and finds that the countries

> have recently introduced new "communicative" textbooks at secondary level, which have arguably placed more pressure on teachers than in the past to use English easily and fluently in the classroom. Teachers following a communicative approach are expected not merely to initiate set responses from their students but rather to initiate a wide range of unpredictable contributions from students and to respond naturally and spontaneously to them. This in turn requires the teachers to continually adjust their speech to an appropriate level of difficulty and to solve unpredictable communication problems from moment to moment. The communicative strategy requires teachers to be prepared for any linguistic emergency. They are also expected to handle authentic or semi-authentic reading texts, often posing cultural, as well as linguistic difficulties.

This raises the question whether non-native speaker teachers are proficient enough to be able to conduct a lesson effectively in English, provide the comprehensible input that learners require, and thus support their processes of acquisition. To shed some light on this issue, I should like to refer to some research data from a survey I conducted among 50 teachers of English in Czech middle schools (for pupils aged 11–15 years). The teachers I worked with came from a variety of backgrounds: some were fully qualified, others were former teachers of Russian requalifying as teachers of English, some had been teaching English for many years, and others were just beginning their careers. My original research purpose was to carry out a needs analysis which would form the basis for designing a syllabus for a teacher-training course run by our university, covering many aspects of teacher training and development. The main instrument used in the survey was a structured questionnaire, but teachers were also encouraged to express themselves freely through open-ended questions. I identified language functions typical of the English classroom, found out which were verbalized in Czech and which in English, and put together a list of phrases actually used by teachers to carry out these functions. Among other things, I wanted to find out in what proportion and for what purposes teachers used English and Czech in the classroom. I was also interested to know what the use of each language might depend on.

My belief was that the amount of English used by the teachers in the classroom would depend primarily on the following variables:

a) teachers' proficiency in English (more proficient teachers would tend to use more English);
b) teachers' beliefs (those who believed in the benefits of maximizing target language use would use English more);
c) learner age (teachers would use more English with younger learners and more Czech with older learners);
d) teacher age (younger teachers would use more English owing to higher proficiency and a willingness to implement innovation).

But what is the situation like in reality?

Are teachers able to conduct a lesson effectively in English?

The teachers were asked whether they felt they had sufficient knowledge of English for the purposes of classroom management, instruction, etc. My expectation was that few would admit to feeling ill-prepared to conduct a lesson in English, though I knew that some re-qualifying teachers must have lacked confidence. The results are shown in Table1. They show that 46% are convinced of their ability to conduct a lesson effectively in English, 44% think they can more or less do it, and

	Yes	No	More or less
Number of responses	22	5	21
By percentage	46%	10%	44%

Table 1
Teachers' responses to the question:
"Do you have sufficient knowledge of English for the purposes of classroom management, instruction, etc.?"

10% know that they are not able to do so. Are these results good or bad? I think that there is room for improvement if we take into account the desired profile of the foreign language teacher as described by many writers. Strevens (1973), for example, asserts that the teacher's command of the target language should be at least adequate for classroom purposes, and error-free in the classroom (see also Lange 1990, Johnson 1990, Richards and Nunan 1990). The report on a Council of Europe workshop (8B, 1995) puts it thus: "Teachers should have and develop further appropriate communication skills in the foreign language which are suited to negotiation both in the classroom and international communication situations at home and abroad" (1995, p.139).

In interpreting the results, however, we should bear in mind that according to our national character, we have a tendency to be modest and to underestimate ourselves. This may explain why many teachers preferred to say that they were only "more or less" able to conduct lessons in English, rather than definitely able. Putting things into perspective, moreover, we cannot expect the language skills of our teachers at middle-school level to be excellent across the board, when less than a decade has elapsed since the major changes introduced in our country. After all, progress can already be observed in the fact that all children in middle schools now learn English, whereas eight years ago they could learn only Russian. It would be very interesting to do the same survey in another eight years. I believe that the teachers' language proficiency and their level of confidence would be considerably higher.

Use of English in the classroom

The teachers were asked to estimate how much English they used in the classroom, by indicating one of the following four options:

a) I try to use only English.
b) I use English as much as possible.
c) The use of English is rather limited.
d) I translate everything into Czech.

Table 2 shows that while most teachers try to use English as much as possible, 25% regard the use of English in their classroom as limited. One reason may be their inability to conduct a lesson in English. Other reasons may relate to the dependence of teachers' English language use on the age and proficiency of the learners (see discussion to follow). It seemed that the teachers were able to express in English the most common language functions as well as those which should be, in their view,

	Only English	As much as possible	English limited	Translate into Czech
Number of responses	1	35	12	0
By percentage	2%	73%	25%	0%

Table 2
Teachers' use of language in the English classroom

mastered by their pupils either actively or passively (greeting, thanking, understanding instructions, asking and replying to questions, etc.). These functions are also specified in the pupils' language syllabuses.

Use of Czech in the classroom

Another area of concern was the range of purposes for which teachers used Czech most often in the classroom. The results can be seen in Table 3.

explaining grammar	46
presenting vocabulary	15
giving instructions	1
teaching pronunciation	8
maintaining discipline	17
setting homework	18
evaluating pupils	12
teaching culture	13
complex explanations	39

Table 3
Numbers of teachers reporting that they used Czech for different purposes in the English classroom

These findings corresponded with my expectations. It seems understandable that teachers should want to use Czech when giving complex explanations to their pupils. The teachers' views on the other purposes for using Czech are made clear in comments they added to this questionnaire item. A content analysis of the comments shows that the decision to use English or Czech is often dependent on the age and proficiency level of the learners. There are, in fact, two types of relationship.

The more common pattern is for teachers to use more English with more advanced and experienced learners, and more Czech with beginners. The reason given is that beginners simply do not understand the instructions and cannot express themselves. None of the teachers mentions the possibility of talking in English to the children and allowing the children to respond in Czech. An additional problem highlighted by some teachers is that young children do not know the metalanguage needed for talking about grammar in English. For this reason, grammar and exercises are explained in Czech. The teachers fail to see the option of leaving out the metalanguage and teaching grammar inductively by providing appropriate non-linguistic clues. Instead, they use Czech to conduct that part of the lesson which they believe to be the most important – i.e., grammar – so that everyone can understand. The comments also suggest some "extremist" views. One teacher says she has to use a lot of Czech with young pupils as they do not understand the grammar rules no matter how hard she tries. What she does not seem to realize is that her pupils may fail to understand any rules at all simply because they are not able to think in abstract terms at that age. Another teacher expresses surprise and disappointment that her young pupils are not able to work systematically, absorb grammar rules and make more than minimal progress. Such comments reveal a lot about the pedagogical skills and knowledge of some of the teachers. They show that the teachers know little or nothing about learning and acquisition processes, learning styles or the learning strategies appropriate to pupils of that age. Instead, the teachers rely heavily on applying deductive learning methods.

A different pattern in choice of language use depending on learner age was reflected in the reported practice of one teacher only. She reports using only English with young children. She explains that she has had some experience in teaching young learners, and that when things are repeated often enough children are usually able to understand everything said to them in English. It seems that she uses Czech with older pupils for more complicated explanations of grammar, games rules and cultural information.

Other comments suggest that some teachers speak in English but rely on translation into Czech when necessary, either by themselves or the more able pupils in the class. It seems that Czech is usually used when it is important for everyone in the class to understand – e.g., when setting homework. Czech is also used for explaining special tasks and projects, pupils' mistakes, and the production of new sounds, and for dealing with weaker pupils and especially those with learning difficulties. Teachers likewise resort to Czech in non-standard situations and situations that need to be handled carefully – e.g., when negotiating results with pupils, etc. – as well as when time is short or when the pupils are tired. On the other hand, teachers tend to use English when motivating pupils or giving advice, unless the case calls for more serious individual attention when Czech would be used. Similarly, in relation to discipline, the more serious issues are generally handled through Czech.

To sum up, the language functions most commonly executed in Czech are those relating to grammar, which require complex explanations, as well as those relating to the more personal and emotional dimension of the teacher-pupil relationship. It seems that teachers do not regard this latter set of functions as part of the classroom discourse but as somehow set apart from the teaching-learning process.

Conclusion

There is little theoretical doubt that maximum exposure to the target language in the classroom is crucial for language acquisition. If teachers believe in the importance of using the L2 in the classroom as much as possible, they should also use it as the primary medium of instruction. Yet my research findings show that the teachers I worked with believed in the communicative method but did not use the L2 as much as they should, partly because of their low language proficiency, but in many cases also because of their poor pedagogical knowledge and skills. Although they accepted the aims of communicative language teaching, they regarded their own role as different from that of a discourse partner in an authentic communicative situation. In other words, they do not fully exploit the linguistic potential offered by the communicative situations which arise naturally in the language classroom. Instead, they believed that their main role is to teach pupils the content: present it, practise it and test it.

Earlier I stated four hypotheses about the relationship between the amount of English used by teachers in the classroom and

a) teachers' L2 proficiency,
b) teachers' beliefs,
c) learner age,
d) teacher age.

In relation to the dependence of English language use on the proficiency level of the teacher, this hypothesis could not be formally tested as I was not able to measure the proficiency levels of the survey sample. On the other hand, their proficiency could be gauged to some extent from their reported levels of English language use in the classroom. However, my research suggests that proficiency is not the only prerequisite for being able to conduct the lesson effectively in English. Pedagogical knowledge and skills also emerge as extremely important factors. This is revealed in the finding that (contrary to my hypothesis) the use of English seems rather limited with young beginners. This finding shows very clearly that it is lack of pedagogical knowledge and skill rather than English proficiency which is at the root of the problem. The teachers are unable to adjust their methods to suit the age of their learners, and consequently teach grammar deductively to pupils in all age categories (as can be seen from the overwhelming reported use of Czech for explaining grammar). The same finding further indicates that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of psychology and pedagogy. They fail to support the natural processes of acquisition or implicit learning, especially in younger pupils who need it most. Instead, they support the more conscious explicit learning processes which play a more important role in older pupils.

I also hypothesized that the amount of English teachers used in the classroom would be dependent on their age. I imagined that younger teachers who have more opportunities to study and travel would be more proficient than older teachers, and would also be more open to new methods and thus use more English in the classroom. The teachers in the survey were generally young, on average less than 30 years of age. Yet the majority seemed to use a lot of Czech in the classroom, in particular with young learners. This further confirmed the view that pedagogical knowledge and skills play a far more important role than I had expected.

To conclude: in order to support the process of learning and acquisition, teachers should conduct the lesson in English. Their ability to conduct a lesson effectively in English depends on their own language proficiency, but also, more importantly perhaps, on their pedagogical skills and knowledge. This has significant implications for teacher education. We must attempt to integrate the development of the language skills that future teachers need in the classroom with the development of their teaching skills. At the same time, we must provide them with a deeper and fuller language education so that they are able to communicate effectively both inside and outside the classroom. We must also ensure that they gain a more thorough understanding and awareness of the learning process in order that they can better promote and support their pupils' learning.

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Focus on interaction and dialogue

Jette Lentz

This paper discusses the role of interaction and dialogue in teaching and learning. I see learning as an individual and social process which is created between people in interaction. We must therefore focus on the differences between people, since it is these that shape the interactive process. For teachers, this means that their own professional scope must extend to the development of good interpersonal skills and, in particular, the practice of constructive teacher-learner dialogue in the classroom.

In what follows I first introduce theories that provide some insight into interpersonal relations. Then I discuss the evaluative perspectives of Danish teachers in relation to the development of interpersonal skills. Finally, I introduce some dialogue principles which in my experience can profitably be used in courses for teachers.

Introduction

The starting point for this article is the fact that many teachers see major problems in introducing processes of learner autonomy in their classes – problems in relation to learners, colleagues and parents. Practising learner autonomy imposes new roles on the teacher as well as the learner. These are different from the traditional roles, where the learner is seen as the passive recipient and the teacher as the active player, transferring knowledge to the learner through more or less one-way communication. Many observation reports on Danish classrooms document that traditional learning is usually what takes place during 80 per cent of a lesson.

Barnes (1976) calls this type of teacher in the traditional classroom the "Transmission teacher", and contrasts him with the "Interpretation teacher", who tries to exploit the learner's own experiences and knowledge in the classroom. I see the interpretation teacher more as a consultant who has a role in teaching diagnostic and problem-solving skills, but who should not work on the actual concrete problem himself. These issues have been elucidated by Schein (1969) in his book about process consultation, and Schein's ideas have played an important role in modern organizational development.

From my own experience as a teacher in comprehensive schools for fifteen years, I believe that learning processes are more profound when children are given the chance to construct their knowledge, using their own thoughts and experiences, in co-operation with other learners and the teacher. I regard getting knowledge not as an instructional process but as an autonomous process that cannot be forced but is supported by a grown-up or teacher. The key word in this process is *dialogue*.

The concept of teaching through dialogue is not new. In Denmark we often quote our theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who already in the last century expressed the following view:

> When one has to bring a person to a certain place, one should first of all take care to meet him where he is and start from there. This is the secret of the art of helping. Anyone who cannot do this deceives himself if he thinks he can help another person. Because to be able to truly help somebody else I need to know more than he does – by first of all understanding what he knows. If I don't do that my greater knowledge does not help him at all.
>
> (Kierkegaard 1962–64, vol.18, p.96)

This quotation brings me to three hypotheses:

- Learning takes place when there are meaningful dialogues and interaction between people.
- Learning processes come into play when there are good relations between the learners and between the learners and the teacher.
- It is the differences between the participants that lead to the creation of new knowledge and progress.

If these hypotheses are correct, it seems to me that teachers today need additional training. Of course, it is still essential for teachers to develop their professional skills and become highly qualified. However, I believe that it is also necessary for them to develop their more personal skills, because effective teacher-learner dialogue depends on the exercise of qualities such as mutual respect, listening skills, confidence and responsibility.

In my opinion, teachers have a responsibility to create situations in which learners feel that their thinking is being used and recognized. These learners will then grow in self-esteem. Moreover, it is well documented that the personal factor plays an important role in the development of learning processes. For example, as a teacher you can have certain "glasses" on when you meet a learner; you can be influenced by your own prejudices or those of others. To minimize this possibility, you need to look at yourself not only as a clever and skilled teacher but also as a person, and to ask yourself how you can establish good relations and constructive dialogues with your learners.

From Rutter's (1990) studies of "pattern breakers" (i.e., children who are able to break free of their disadvantaged social heritage), we know that significant adults other than the mother or father are able to compensate for possible defects in the family. This significant person could be, for example, a teacher or a sports coach, with whose help the child may grow to realize that she is able to solve problems when given appropriate support. This experience may then encourage her to seek new challenges.

Some teachers do not welcome the fact that their function is changing and would like to return to the old times when they could focus more on teaching and less on care-giving and co-operation. They feel that many learners today are becoming more self-centred. Society has changed and parents take less responsibility for their children because they are busy making careers for themselves. But maybe the school system needs changing too. For it does not always seem able to cope with the sudden changes that are taking place in society, the enormous increase in the flow of information, and the activists who demand to have a say in the way society is run. At bottom, the development of such democratic processes depends on having a democratic teacher. If parents cannot support their children in these processes, I think it is essential that the educational system has teachers who can.

But are teachers in Denmark in a position to say no to these new demands for change? I do not think they are if they intend to abide by the new law. In Denmark educational legislation was introduced in 1993 which made new demands of teachers in comprehensive schools. Briefly and among other things, it stated that the users of the school (parents and learners) must have a say and share responsibility in what takes place in the classroom. Differences in instruction and tuition are proposed. All learners, both weak and clever, must experience success in their school work.

From my own experience of working with in-service teachers implementing the new law, it seems that many of them find it hard to have to deal with interpersonal relations and, for example, to co-operate with some parents and learners. They report that today's children bring their needs and problems from home to the classroom, but these teachers are not really willing to do welfare work, as required by the law. Apart from this, the new law also stipulates that teachers must improve their subject area skills, organize project work and adopt interdisciplinary perspectives.

In the evaluation report on differences in teaching that the Danish Ministry of Education published in 1997, it is emphasized that Danish teachers who took part in the developmental projects expressed a need to work on their interpersonal skills. Specifically, they recognized a need to develop their competence in conducting appropriate teacher-learner dialogue. They saw it as a challenge to extend the focus of teaching to the learning processes of their learners. They also wanted to be able to construct the kinds of learning conversations which do not manipulate but support, inspire and challenge the learners.

To meet these needs, it is suggested that sessions might be set up at schools where teachers could support one another in the practice of structured learning conversations. The aim would be to enable a network of people to work together all the time and develop their professionalism as teachers and dialogue partners, thereby reducing the risk of falling into communication patterns that are inappropriate or inexpedient.

Before elaborating on how this can be done in practice, I want to refer briefly to some theories which are relevant to understanding the ways in which interpersonal skills can be developed.

Interpersonal theories

In brief, interpersonal theories developed from systems theories, originally in relation to family therapy in Italy (Campbell et al., 1994), and Anglo-Saxon object-relation theories. I have chosen to focus mainly on the experiences of the British child therapist Donald Winnicott (1971), and the many observations that American psychologist Daniel Stern (1985) has made on early mother-child interaction. They have both provided developmental psychology with many new ideas. I think that insight into these early communication patterns can provide us with knowledge of how good interaction is developed later in life. Moreover, they show us how impingement from the grown-up produces reactive responses and isolation.

Current research on early mother-child interaction shows us that the child learns essential features through these initial processes of communication with the mother. These structures are integrated in the child's later developmental phases of social interaction. Daniel Stern's research reveals that babies are social beings from the time of birth and are able to communicate – or be in interaction – with their caregivers from the very start of life.

Winnicott (1971) and Stern (1985) both have important views on how to "hold" and "tune in" to the young child. They emphasize the importance of the mother's role as caregiver. How does she interact with the child? How does she support the child's own endeavours towards mastery and autonomy? In my view, the teacher can perform the same function as the mother in the child's early development by continuing to support the child's "I". In the following Figures 1 and 2 I have tried to indicate the correspondences between the mother's and the teacher's role when supporting the development of the young child and learners' autonomy respectively. This, essentially, is how I see the individual being supported by significant others when developing processes of autonomy.

In systems theory (Campbell et al., 1994), problems – and development – are always seen in terms of relations. You live and you work in

D. W. Winnicott (about the mother)	My own interpretation (about the teacher)
She identifies the child as an independent person	She sees the learners in the classroom as individual persons
She accepts the child	She acknowledges the learners
She contains the child's feeling	She is able to contain the learner's feelings without losing herself
She gives the child room to try out and develop new skills	She is able to create an atmosphere of growth

Figure 1
Winnicott: "holding"

Daniel Stern (about the mother)	My own interpretation (about the teacher)
She is able to share affective conditions with the child	She is able to identify herself with what her learners are affectively engaged in
She is able to shift an event to a mutual feeling	She has the ability to preserve her learners' own steering instead of judging them

Figure 2
Stern: "tuning in"

systems, each with different relations. But all the different parts in the system are connected to each other. You cannot find any true or simple answer to a problem. Everyone in the system has their version, and reality is seen through the "glasses" that you happen to be wearing at the time.

If you want to change things, the focus must be on how communication in the system operates. People are constantly moving, so there are no absolute truths, only "versions". Therefore it is important to emphasize the differences in the system because they support people's movement and development.

I think that this way of viewing development in people can be related to the idea that thinking is a constructive process. Reality is constructed by me, as a subject in a closed system. But the system is opened through dialogue, or relations. The differences then appear, and this is reality – as seen by me now.

These principles can be presented as in Figure 3. I see dialogue as an equal conversation – even when it is a conversation between a learner and a teacher, which is traditionally defined as non-symmetrical. A dialogue must be clarifying, investigating and reflective. It does not aim to instruct, examine or convince. There is respect for the other's

- Reality is seen through the glasses that you are wearing
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Different ways of thinking
- Dialogues
- You yourself contain the solutions to problems
- You have the resources to construct your own solutions
- Dialogues are built upon voluntariness

Figure 3
Principles from systems consultation

perspective, and joint responsibility and trust for one another's actions. The basis for a dialogue is "active listening" (Rogers 1951). This includes interviewing and giving non-verbal encouragement in order to find out what the other person thinks or feels. In the classroom, the teacher's questions must be open and signal curiosity, which means that she is reflecting and conducting herself according to what her learners are thinking.

My experience of working with teachers suggests that they are interested in improving their communication skills in order to be better at co-operating with learners, parents or colleagues. Being an "active listener" by keeping focus on the other person without interrupting or bringing in one's own perspective, is perhaps straightforward enough in debates or discussions. But in dialogues with learners, where one of the teacher's aims might be to support learners in making their own plans for a lesson using their own thoughts and ideas, I think it is necessary to use the principles that I have derived from systems consultation.

Problems can arise if the teacher is worried, and for one or another reason is concentrating on her own focus instead of taking account of the learner's perspective, or if she has negative presentiments about the learner. In other words, problems arise because the teacher is not able to "contain" (Winnicott 1971) or "tune in" (Stern 1985) to the learner.

By encouraging the child's own natural urge to explore, we create the conditions for learning to take place. When talking to the learner it is therefore important that teachers do not focus on problems or deficiencies but start by focussing on the learner's inner resources. What are his creative forces, what are his dreams? I think that if we concentrate on the learner's positive sides – past, present and future – as well as on his motivation and interests, we can make it easier for him to learn.

Working as a consultant for teachers, I have found that many need to develop appropriate techniques for interacting with their learners and their colleagues. It is essential that they see themselves as good interlocutors and good listeners before they embark on the practice of reflective dialogues with their learners. Moreover, if teachers feel good, this feeling will also rub off on their learners. In this respect, some teachers say they need to work on themselves and their own self-esteem first, before they can expect great changes from their learners.

How then can teachers find opportunities to air issues such as teaching conditions and teacher-learner relations, while at the same time supporting one another in dealing with problems? In the last part of this article, I will offer one possible approach and briefly recount my own experience of setting up short courses where teachers can practise reflective dialogue and at the same time give one another professional support.

Colleague support

Teachers have reported that there is no real tradition of dialogue among colleagues at their schools. Getting someone to listen to you when you have problems in your classes generally happens on a random basis only. Moreover, the common experience is that your colleague in the conversation does not really listen to you. He might offer his own similar experiences or be very quick to come up with solutions or advice that you cannot use. Lack of time is also an issue, because often the only opportunity for such an exchange is during one of the breaks between lessons. These situations do not generally give rise to sound advice, understanding or possible solutions to problems, and thus may not lead to better practice and enhanced competence.

Where can you go then if you face a problem with a colleague, learners or parents? Or what happens if you are one of the few teachers at your school who practise autonomy with learners? What can you do if you want to discuss with other experienced teachers what happens when negotiations with learners do not succeed? I suggest that schools could arrange for courses to be provided on practising structured reflective dialogues through colleague support. Colleagues are given the opportunity to practise interviewing and reflecting processes in order to support a focus person in finding her own solutions to a problem. Mutually convenient times for these sessions are arranged (e.g., three hours in the afternoon every three weeks during school term), and the form, method and relations to be adopted (e.g., from systems consultation) are agreed by the participants.

Through the practice of these special principles of dialogue and the supportive reflections of the team as a whole, teachers help one another to go on developing their professional identity in relation to learners, colleagues, parents and themselves.

Courses of this kind enable those using dialogue or interview methods to learn how to ask appropriate questions and to learn to listen. For the focus person (that is, the person whose problem is under consideration), the experience serves to increase self-reflection and self-knowledge. Participants work in small groups during these structured sessions. Both the interviewer and the team providing supportive reflections pose questions that respect the focus person's perspective, rather than questions that aim to examine, convince, instruct or advise, or that express a sense of superior knowledge. Teachers who have taken part in courses of this kind have generally evaluated them as very useful for their profession. Some feel that they still need to do a lot of training in order to become good listeners, give their interlocutor time, and refrain from jumping in with advice or from bringing in their own perspectives.

It is important that these courses are arranged on a voluntary basis, and that they are not planned "upstairs", by the school management, but are built collaboratively through a network of colleague support. Many teachers who have experienced these courses express a need for continued regular contact with their colleagues, so that they can go on supporting one another as they work through further changes in their role as teacher. It can be very difficult to go on developing these dialogue principles in the classroom because many teachers still see themselves in the traditional teacher's role. They find little time for the individual learner, and they are unsure whether organizing the class into smaller groups will work. They think that they must be in control of most of what goes on in the classroom, otherwise chaos may set in. As a result, when they talk with their learners, it is mainly for the purpose of giving instructions or advice.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize again the relational aspects of all learning processes. Learning and development take place when there is meaningful dialogue between the participants. It is the differences between people – and their acceptance of those differences – that create progress and development. In short, there is a need for mutual respect, listening, trust and responsibility. My own experience as one who provides courses for teachers in comprehensive schools suggests that teachers are keen to develop the good interpersonal skills demanded by this view of learning and interaction.

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Developing autonomy in a pre-service teacher training programme: a case study

José Luis Vera-Batista

> I have learned much from my teachers, I have learned much from my colleagues, but, above all, I have learned much from my students.
> (*Talmud*)

> Our trainees are not blank sheets. They know quite a lot. Our essential job as teacher trainers is coordinating and developing what they can contribute, starting from where *they are* and not from where *we are*. (J. L. Vera 1991)

> It is not enough to wish learner autonomy, we have to put it gradually into practice. (J. L. Vera 1991)

Preliminary reflections

With this paper I intend to give a practical account of the approach I adopted to designing an initial teacher-training programme, an approach developed through a three-year research project. The whole project aimed to emphasize from the very beginning the incorporation of the students in the teaching/learning process through the development of phases and degrees of autonomy. Everything changes after incorporating learner autonomy: teaching/learning, process/ products, learner/teacher roles, teaching/learning strategies, etc.

If we look at the above quotations, especially the third one, I believe they clearly express what I think about initial teacher training. In this paper, I will introduce you to the steps and media that made this project possible.

What made me reflect on finding new paths was the fact of not feeling comfortable with the university and its routines. There was a clear contradiction between my ideas and my practice, especially coming from the primary school world, in which I had tried most of the ideas afterwards developed in the research project. I was new at the university level and I was a bit cautious about drastically changing the system. Unexpectedly the university world had not changed as much as I had believed, especially on the students´ side: they blindly believed that they still needed to be spoon-fed with knowledge.

This paper is not addressed to teachers who feel pleased with their teaching, but to those looking for ways of reinterpreting their approach to Initial Teaching Training. The plan presented here should not be put into practice straightaway as it is. This programme should be considered a final product. I would recommend introducing it gradually, starting from the actions, tasks, media or whatever area you feel comfortable with. Once the process starts, it gradually finds and fixes its own ways towards cohesion and, above all, coherence. Continuous evaluation of the whole process is essential. This has to be the starting point of new incorporations. The main objective of writing this paper is to offer another alternative approach, nothing else.

Teacher training is not an easy task, but we sometimes complicate it by trying to give our students a far too perfect and distant picture of what a teacher is. Is this the result of any of our own frustrations? No one person is identical to any other. This does not mean that we cannot learn from others but we must always combine what others offer us with the idea of being ourselves.

It would be easier for us to think that our job is assessing, facilitating, in a word, educating. This position is not passive at all. It is the most active I know. It simply means including our students in our planning, decisions, solutions, etc. The students are the ones who have the obligation and responsibility of becoming teachers. We, as teacher trainers, can support and develop this will. Why not add "co-" to everything we do: co-planning, co-responsibility, etc.? As a result of this, we can learn as much as they do from the process.

It might seem that this decision to adopt a collaborative approach in Initial Training is the easiest and most comfortable to carry out. But this is definitely not the case. This plan of work requires organization, media, instruments, a coherent attitude, continuous respect, etc., especially at the beginning of the experience. Quite sincerely, there were moments when I would have preferred to be the controller of the whole process. Thank goodness, however, this feeling quickly changed when I looked at the work and progress made by the students.

I do not want to give the impression that the chosen path is for "special teachers". The most important factor is our personal and professional coherence. I advise the following reasoning: "What type of teacher do I want to be, do I know how to be, can/must I be?" Each of us will have a different answer to these questions, according to a great number of factors or circumstances. The crucial point is to try to look for alternatives despite our successes and failures. We cannot imitate others. Our contexts are different. The best thing about this profession is that we have no general rules.

Let us now reflect on the attitude towards autonomy. This is the key concept. It would be very difficult to explain the process of autonomy without taking into account the changing of attitudes among both teacher and learners. Autonomy means a plural and open process in which the teacher and the learners must accept the changing of attitudes at the same time as they are put into practice. It also seems vague to talk about autonomy without action. When we think of action, we are talking also of the evaluation of this and the curricular decisions taken as a result of it.

We consider the curriculum to be the space where autonomy takes place. In fact, for us the curriculum is the basic source of autonomy. Every single curricular element or sub-element will offer us different possibilities for implementing autonomy. It is up to us to interpret appropriately what is on offer with "autonomy eyes" or not.

The context

The experience recounted here is the result of a three-year research programme with students in their last year of an undergraduate university course. Similar programmes have been carried out since then (1990) with pre-service teacher-training courses for both primary (undergraduate) and secondary school teachers (postgraduate). The origins of this idea derived from my 17 years of teaching experience in primary school. The central objective of this research was to study the influence of learner autonomy on the learning/teaching process in pre-service teacher training.

The curricula at primary and secondary levels have changed in Spain (LOGSE). The students who participated in this programme were going to be working within the reformed new curricula. The option which seemed most obvious to me was to adapt everything to the demands the students were going to face in the very near future. Autonomy is fully considered in the new curricula. There is a current plan, supported by our local government, which aims to implement autonomy in secondary school through an optional workshop introduced as part of the curriculum. This is an important recognition of the need for autonomy, although a great deal of work has yet to be done to ensure that this workshop is integrated into other subjects and not considered as separate and unrelated (see the paper by Candelaria Torres in this volume).

From now onwards in this paper, "we" means "myself and all the students who have participated in developing this programme". It would be totally unfair to use "I" when we have learned so much together.

Basic principles behind the programme/research project

1. We wished to be: reflective, able to analyse our practice and take curricular decisions, flexible, open to changes, able to work with others, able to consider ourselves as life-long learners and, overall, responsible for our teaching and learning. These objectives correspond to the ones demanded by both the reform of the new curricula in primary and secondary schools and the team in charge of the one-year postgraduate teacher-training course (CCP) – compulsory for postgraduate students who want to join the state school system.
2. There was to be a negotiated and gradual change in the teacher's and students' roles (phases and degrees of autonomy). A greater emphasis on the students' roles was both desirable and essential.
3. A corpus of terminology had to be developed.
4. The contents were open and negotiated throughout the process, except the final tasks (see 9 below) which were selected at the beginning of the programme.
5. The students were asked to participate actively and responsibly in: planning, carrying out the plans, evaluating, negotiating, assuming responsibilities in organization, feedback, etc.
6. The final evaluation had to be negotiated. The final criteria to be considered had to be implemented and assumed throughout the process. Students who could not follow the whole process were required to attend private tutorials. In addition, they had to negotiate the final criteria for their evaluation through a meeting with the teacher. The final tasks were adapted to their specific cases and were designed to make the best of their circumstances, all of these participants being in-service teachers.
7. Quality rather than quantity.

8. There were different types of sessions according to our needs: expository sessions, tutorial sessions, workshops, talks by external visitors, debates, etc.
9. The establishment of final and enabling tasks. The final tasks were chosen according to professional requirements, such as the design of a unit of work (this was considered the centre of the programme), the development of a task in a micro-teaching situation, an oral defence of the unit of work based on the contents seen, keeping a "Record File" (Diary), internal and external observations. The programme tried to fulfil the above-mentioned requirements through enabling tasks. These tasks were chosen according to our previous experience with similar students and school requirements. They were considered "empty containers" that the students had to complete.
10. To do as we preached. That is to say, we tried to put into practice the same philosophy of teaching/learning we were promoting, according to the new reform in primary and secondary schools.

Developing autonomy through phases and degrees: actions, types of tasks, media used, roles, etc.

Before listing the actions, types of tasks, means used, etc., we think it is necessary to concentrate our attention on what we define as phases and degrees of autonomy.

It is very difficult to make students aware of their autonomy in terms of their responsibility in the teaching/learning process. This is certainly true of the Spanish context. Students expect the teacher to feed them with knowledge, even at university level. Taking into account our circumstances, we therefore decided to introduce the concepts of *phases* and *degrees*.

A *phase* is defined as a unit of time, e.g. two months. It means a total or partial change in any of the curricular elements, sub-elements or processes. The teacher or the learners decide to start a new phase or step in which, according to the evolution of the course, the objectives, contents, methodology or evaluation are totally or partially changed. For example, learners may decide to start working in groups, following a phase of individual work. This curricular decision might affect, in one way or another, the objectives, contents, methodology or evaluation of the course. We decided to name the phases as follows: Phase 0 (Introduction), Phase I (Beginning of the programme), Phase II (Development) and Phase III (Conclusion/End of the process).

A *degree* is defined as the intensity of the interdependent relationship established between the teacher and the students in parallel to the tasks worked. This is the scale we use to express this idea:

> **Degrees 0 and 1:** The teacher develops tasks which are totally controlled or quite controlled. The students do what the teacher says.
> **Degree 2:** The teacher controls the task partially. There is a certain margin for students to develop their autonomy.
> **Degree 3:** The task is completely or almost completely free from teacher control. The students exhibit the maximum amount of autonomy expected at this stage.

Another way of considering the notion of degree is as the capacity for decision, election or responsibility the students have. It could also be called the degree of responsibility the students have (accepted by them and transferred to them by the teacher).

School year

PHASE O	PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III
INTRODUCTION	BEGINNING	DEVELOPMENT	CONCLUSION

Degrees of autonomy

0	0	0	0
	0/1	0/1	0/1
	1	1	1
		1/2	1/2
		2	2
		2/3	2/3
			3

0: Totally guided/controlled
1: Quite guided/controlled
2: Guided/controlled
3: Little guided/controlled, free

Figure 1
Phases and degrees of learner autonomy

Phase O	NEW INCORPORATIONS: 1. Questionnaire (50 questions) on conceptions of teaching and learning 2. Planning of the course 3. Questionnaire on the planning presented 4. Plan of autonomy 5. "Record File" Teacher's diary
Phase I Repeat: 1 2 4 5 Teacher's diary	NEW INCORPORATIONS 6. Basic contents 7. Readings 8. Workshops 9. Compulsory attendance 10. Evaluation criteria for all types of student 11. Developing the plan for learner autonomy 12.The subject as a global idea 13. Avoid unnecessary conflicts 14. Follow-up sheet 15. Suggestion box 16. Commentaries on the follow-up sheets 17. Representatives' meeting (records/minutes) 18. Individual and group assessment in tutorial sessions 19. Beginning the class observations 20. Working groups
Phase II Repeat: 1 11 2 12 4 13 5 17 6 18 7 19 8 20	NEW INCORPORATIONS: 21. Committees 22. External visitors 23. Case studies 24. Reflections on group dynamics 25. Preparation and organization of Phase III 26. Free attendance 27. Group records/minutes + personal/group diaries
Phase III Repeat: 1 8 18 24 2 10 19 26 4 11 20 27 5 12 21 6 13 22 7 17 23 Teacher's diary	NEW INCORPORATIONS 28. Design, presentation and oral defence of a didactic project 29. Workshops given or requested by the students 30. External observations in schools 31. Final questionnaires

Figure 2

Summary of the elements introduced during the phases

Phases and degrees of autonomy are combined in Figure 1 to indicate their relationship. The degrees added to each phase signal the maximum amount of autonomy the teacher can expect from the students at this stage of development. This is just an idea that can be altered, as with everything, according to the circumstances. It simply emphasizes the gradual stages in autonomy that a teacher can expect learners to attain in the progression from phase to phase. Figure 2 summarizes the programme followed. We will comment on each phase below.

Commentaries on each phase

Remarks:

1. The numbers in brackets below refer to the element mentioned in Figure 2.
2. Since space does not permit us to develop each element in depth, we focus here on the ones which are the most significant for understanding the whole process.
3. If you are interested in knowing any more concrete details about the elements mentioned here, please contact us:

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4. It is essential for the reader to contrast the elements presented in Figure 2, in order to check which ones are repeated, which disappear and what the new incorporations are.

Phase 0 – The questionnaire (1) on conceptions of teaching and learning (50 questions) was given at the very beginning of the experience to probe the students' previous knowledge. It was not, however, an evaluation instrument controlled by the trainer, but a working tool which the students themselves consulted (using the three final numbers on their identity card as a means of identifying their own questionnaire from among the collected set).

The plan for the course (2) was presented, reflected upon and debated. The reaction of the students at this stage was one of amazement and disbelief. Despite their expectations of something unusual – a result of rumours from previous courses – they had difficulty in accepting what they were hearing and participation was very slow to start. Only 15 of the 78 students participated to any degree, and only after the trainer had begun to take the decisions that the students were not taking.

Their initial surprise and their change in attitude and resulting enthusiasm to participate were reflected in a questionnaire given out after this course planning session (3).

We also presented and gave them our plan for autonomy (4) with 34 points. This was a summary of our expectations about their autonomy and ways to put it into practice – a plan which gave rise to even greater astonishment among the students.

We introduced them to the idea and benefits of a "Record File" (Diary), passing them some samples from previous courses. It was clear that the students now could not believe what they were seeing. They expressed their confusion and worry about such an amount of work. Although we tried to calm them, most of them seemed reluctant to accept the "new thing" that was presented to them.

We also told them that the teacher was going to keep a diary and that everyone who wanted to could have a look at it to contrast his/her ideas. You can imagine their faces upon being informed by a university professor that they could see a private document normally kept secret.

This phase lasted for 8 hours (a week and a half). Degrees of autonomy: 0, 0/1, 1.

General commentary – It is extremely important for the students to know from the very beginning the reasons for doing something, what and how everything is going to be done, the teacher's expectations, the roles that each member of the programme will play, the degree of responsibility expected, etc. All this will create the right atmosphere for beginning the development of a programme with these characteristics.

Phase I – The process started. We began with the design of a unit of work (6) that immediately demanded some readings (7). We divided our references into three areas: a reading dossier with selected articles, a basic bibliography with all the material produced for or within the curricular reform, and a complementary bibliography. The two last references where part of our Self-Access Centre for which a committee of students was required during Phase II (21). There were individual or group readings depending on the case. These types of readings were usually accompanied by a reading task which was the basis for debates or group work.

The workshops (8) on the basic contents and readings were given and planned by the teacher in this phase. Student participation began to increase, obviously depending on the types of tasks delivered.

Students voted for attendance to be compulsory at this stage (9). This was accepted in the presentation of the programme (2).

We gave them the evaluation criteria from the last course in order to have a starting point to discuss their own criteria (10). These included the criteria for those who attended regularly as well as the external students. We told them that they had to give alternatives to the given list either individually or in groups. These were to be discussed in the first Representatives' Meeting we had (17). We also told them that the evaluation criteria were going to be open throughout the whole process.

We periodically reminded students of the plan for learner autonomy we had presented at the beginning of the course (4). This encouraged students to feel that they were part of this plan and to accept it in a much more conscious way.

One of the key elements of this phase is the follow-up sheet (14). We are going to develop it here because of its importance.

Individual follow-up sheet*

1. Define with a word/sentence/picture the work done this week/fortnight.
2. Name and surnames
3. From...to... Group No.
4. Contents seen this week/fortnight:
    4.1 In the class sessions:
    4.2 Worked autonomously. Add I (individually) or G (Group). The source used (book, article, etc.) must be mentioned.
5. The most positive thing this week/fortnight has been:
6. Difficulties found. How did you solve them?
7. Self-evaluation/opinion on the work done this week/fortnight. Use the following symbols: A, B, C, D, E + arrows
8. How is your group work going on? Any difficulty? How did you solve it?
9. Any doubts about any aspects worked on in the class sessions or autonomously?

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* Some of these ideas came from Leni Dam's follow-up sheets

10. Any commentary, constructive criticism, alternatives, suggestions, ideas, etc. that may help our sessions?

Not all the students were prepared to use points 7 and 10 in the follow-up sheet above. The idea of using a Suggestion Box (15) was an alternative given by a student in the first course of this kind, so this alternative was offered now for those who did not feel comfortable enough to express their self-evaluation and, in particular, to give their opinion on the work done on a sheet that disclosed their name. The suggestion box disappeared at the end of this phase because of their growing trust in the programme and thanks to the first commentaries on the follow-up sheets (16). It is extremely important for students to receive some kind of feedback on the follow-up sheets. We started providing feedback orally but one of the students suggested the idea of putting it in writing which proved to be the most appropriate and useful approach. This is a fantastic opportunity to reinforce, amplify, clarify, suggest, give clues, etc. The effect on the students is unpredictable but very helpful. We can say without any doubt that this instrument helps to balance the whole programme, together with the follow-up sheet (14), the suggestion box (15) and the Representatives' meetings (17).

Our first representatives' meeting (17) took place. The work groups were not yet officially formed, although there were groups working according to the demands of the tasks delivered. We told the students to group themselves in fives and choose a representative to come to the meeting. It is very important to give the contents of this meeting in advance so that students can prepare alternative suggestions and opinions about it. One of the students was the secretary of the meeting and kept a written record of the session. This tool is a vital instrument. Our agreements must be written down both for our sake and for our students' sake in case any doubts should arise. The main points of this meeting are: the evaluation of the previous fortnight, the planning of the following fortnight through negotiation, and other points proposed by them. Students could suggest any points for inclusion in advance of the meeting. In fact, there was a poster in class with the issues to be dealt with where they could add their own suggestions. It should be added that all the groups need to know these points before coming to the meeting, so that they can prepare alternative suggestions and opinions about the ideas coming from other groups.

Observation of their own classes (19) was another key element. There was a need to be prepared for this. An external teacher (one of the observers of the programme) wanted to participate in the preparation of this area and so we took advantage of this fact. He came once a week (two hours per week) to train students in the use of different observation sheets which were going to be utilized in the internal (19) and external (30) observations. The observations were done in pairs, which obliged students to negotiate their opinions. These opinions were the basis for a written report on the points observed.

The groups were officially formed (from 2 up to 5 members) (20). It is very important for the students to have time to get accustomed to working with different people, before they choose the group in which they want to work on a permanent basis. Although the groups were always going to be open to changes, students who wanted to move to another group had to give us their reasons for doing so.

This phase lasted for two and a half months. Degrees of autonomy: 0, 0/1, 1, 1/2.

General commentary – The basic pillars of the programme were settled during this phase. This phase is the most complicated. Any wrong interpretation or expectation (for example, going too quickly), or any misunderstanding (especially affective), will create an atmosphere of resistance among the students which is difficult to resolve in the rest of the course. It is also true that everything becomes "familiar" at the end of this phase, if we have done it appropriately. Although we cannot predict beforehand and out of context what should be done if this phase does not work as expected, I believe that nothing drastic can happen *if we have the right attitude towards autonomy*. There are no isolated elements and everything reinforces one single idea: to make the students responsible for what they do in the most creative and open way possible. We cannot expect students to understand or be fully aware of everything at this stage. That comes later.

Phase II – Among the most significant elements of this phase was the creation of students' committees (21). These were formed by volunteers who wanted to help within the programme. This idea reinforces the necessary co-responsibility this programme aims at from the very beginning. It is impossible for one teacher to cope with all the demands that a programme like this generates, so we have to offer the students the possibility of collaborating and show them that this help is necessary. This programme grows in effectiveness and quality because of this collaboration. Will they not, as future teachers, take decisions? How can they learn to do this? There is an obvious answer: by taking decisions, and by developing and evaluating them. From our point of view, a "normal" teacher trainer assumes far too many responsibilities. The committees were in charge of: audiovisual means, the Self-Access Centre, selecting readings, organizing complementary activities, getting information about Postgraduate Teacher Training Courses (CCP) in other parts of Spain, internal observations, external observations, and assessing others in group dynamics.

Another important element of this phase was the series of sessions with external visitors (22). These were teachers of different levels, the organizer of the Postgraduate Teacher Training Course, representatives of teachers' trade unions, two psychology teachers who talked about the psychological characteristics of the age groups that our students would be working with, etc. These activities were organized by the students' committee in charge.

We used case studies (23) in the workshops. These are very useful because they enable students to place theoretical and practical aspects in a particular context. We follow a very easy format for working with case studies: we focus on positive aspects and negative aspects for which students have to find alternative solutions. As a source for these case studies, we used different questionnaires given out to real teachers on several In-Service Teacher Training Courses. In fact, the case studies became a resource for debates, solution-seeking, bibliographical reference, creativity, etc.

Something we did not expect but which appeared during this course was the need for reflection on group dynamics (24). We perceived some problems among the groups during our tutorial sessions. We therefore thought it was appropriate to make them reflect on the rules a group should follow in order to progress in their work and in the development of autonomy. We devoted two sessions to this. It seems strange that students at university level do not know how to work in groups, though we do not think it is exclusively their fault. Using different questionnaires we encouraged groups to reflect on their problems, a process that proved to be very interesting. There was a special committee formed to deal with this issue of group dynamics. The committee comprised two students: one was a psychologist and the other had been to Roskilde University (Denmark) as an Erasmus exchange student, where she had

had to face various problems while working in a group.

Phase III would be based on tutorial sessions with no formal classes, except some workshops. There was a need to inform and prepare students well for this "special" period (25).

At one Representatives' Meeting (17), students decided not to make attendance compulsory during this phase (26). The truth is that not many students missed the sessions, but there was no need to control attendance as they had wanted in Phase I. It is worth noting that in the previous course the students had decided to incorporate attendance as one of the evaluation criteria.

The follow-up sheet (14) disappeared. It was substituted by group records/minutes or personal/group diaries (27). This was also a decision taken by the students. These new instruments proved to be more personal and valuable, as they were organized by the students themselves.

Tutorial sessions became extremely important during this phase. Group records/minutes or personal/group diaries (27) were constantly consulted to see how their work was implemented and also to make students think of alternatives to their problems.

This phase lasted for two months. Degree of autonomy: 0, 0/1, 1, 1/2, 2, 2/3

General commentary – This phase can be characterized by the transfer of responsibility as the contents and structures for working together are developed in greater depth. It is extremely important for students to grasp the whole message through every single action. We can directly demand a great deal of responsibility at this stage of the programme. Our role as teacher trainers must also be marked out. We have to keep our position strong but at the same time flexible. Cohesion and coherence are now the basic principles and there is a need for constant balance, which is seldom difficult to carry out if the programme has been well developed. The students perceive this position and accept it freely. We have to offer as much as they do but on an equal basis. In this regard, we find that the Representatives' Meetings (17) are particularly helpful. We insist on the importance of this phase as a preparation for phase III.

Phase III – This phase is the peak of the programme. This was when the students had to apply what they had encountered during the previous phases. They had no formal classes for the rest of the course, so everything had to be clarified before starting this phase in order to avoid disorientation. The contacts planned during this phase were the tutorial sessions, the written comments that were given every fortnight, the representatives' meetings and the workshops requested or given by the students.

How do we reach this stage? First, by being convinced of the idea, and secondly by informing the Department and the Dean of the Faculty about it. It is crucial that our colleagues know about the programme before they see students with no "normal" lessons leaving the classroom when they themselves have finished teaching. Otherwise they will be prompted to ask "Which teacher is due to teach here now?" We still remember the first year when it happened and recall the Dean's face at my departmental meeting when we proposed what we were going to do. In one way or another, after three years everyone was getting accustomed to this "eccentric" way of working (as one of the teachers put it). Obviously, when we present a programme like this, we have to be sure about the difficulties and problems in its development. Some alternatives must be worked out in order not to disorientate both the rest of our colleagues and the rest of the students. We have always been lucky in this sense. Our experience informs us that in the middle of the process the students defend it as much as we do. (Regrettably, lack of space does not permit me to give details of all the tasks mentioned here, but further information may be obtained by contacting me directly.)

The design of a didactic project (28) was the central task of this phase. This task demanded actions such as using a bibliography, attending tutorial sessions to discuss what was being done, asking other external teachers for their opinions, choosing the right media, having meetings instead of formal classes, working cooperatively, writing diaries to keep records of their process, etc. The conditions under which they had to plan this task, though initially established at the end of phase II, were readjusted throughout this phase. The written commentaries were the instrument we used to keep everyone informed about any possible changes. The ideas for change obviously came from our tutorial sessions.

Another task, linked to the didactic project, was the presentation of one of the tasks planned in a microteaching situation (28). Students were very worried about their "new role". They asked for a weekly workshop to develop teaching abilities. Attendance was optional. At the end of this phase they seemed to be more confident about "this risk". Two further details should be added here: students had to observe their colleagues (using the observation sheet worked with beforehand), and participate in a debate about the presentations seen at the end of the session. The conditions and criteria for evaluating this task were also negotiated in the Representatives' meetings.

Each group had to defend the didactic project orally (28). In this session, they could use the "Record File" or any media they wanted. The trainer's objectives behind this were several: to know the students' capacity to associate the concepts worked with during the programme, observe their capacity for reaction, observe group cohesion, check the depth of their beliefs, etc. Since this oral defence task was another cause for concern among the students, model questions were negotiated and established in advance.

The key element of this phase is without doubt the tutorial session. The reservations my colleagues might have had about the students' work soon disappeared. There were students working everywhere: in the bar, in the park, in the library, in the corridors, etc. To organize the tutorial sessions appropriately there was a need to appoint times. A schedule was placed in the caretaker's office, open 12 hours a day, in order to facilitate students in choosing a slot. Students had to specify the reasons for their tutorial session and the media they could foresee would be needed. This information helped us greatly to run our tutorial sessions in a much more effective way. Our role was not to correct their design of the typical teacher-student relationship but to give them clues and suggestions, set questions for discovery, create doubts which implied a need to look for a solution to a problem, etc. Sometimes students left the tutorial session with more doubts than they had brought in. During these sessions I took note of any ideas that were going to be valid in the design of their project and put these afterwards in the already mentioned written commentaries.

The students also wanted to observe "real teachers", although this was not part of the initial programme but in fact part of their programme for the following year (CCP). The committee (21) planned three visits. Most students made two visits only because it was approaching the end of term and schools were not always prepared to accept them as observers. Nevertheless, the students were very satisfied with the experience.

At the end of the course we administered the questionnaires that gave us the final data for the research project.

This phase lasted for three months. Degrees of autonomy: 0, 0/1, 1, 1/2, 2, 2/3, 3

General commentary – The result of all our efforts became clear during this phase. The previous phases make no sense without this one. That is why we emphasized from the very beginning the role of the final tasks in this type of programme: we need to have in mind a clear picture of what we want in order to be efficient and not create an atmosphere of uncertainty.

During this phase, what seemed to us more important than learning content in the traditional sense were the following features: the human aspects, relations of interdependence, organization, strategies (especially those that facilitate autonomy), planning, the development of creativity, readiness for dialogue, reflection, the capacity to take decisions and be responsible for them, flexibility, etc.

Evaluation of the programme/research project: results

Objectives: totally achieved
Contents seen: many more than expected beforehand
Methodology: optimally accomplished
Evaluation: extremely satisfactory

We are convinced that this type of experience self-evaluates itself thoughout the whole process, so that the summative evaluation is nothing but the end of the programme itself, in other words, something already predictable. It was the third time that we had had an experience like this, although we have to say that each programme has been unique. The only feature that remains the same is the structure of the whole programme. We ended this experience by being very satisfied with it. We have to say that it was hard and laborious for all of us, but enormously gratifying. Our professional future is still in the same hands: the students' in their hands, mine in my hands. Taking this metaphor of hands a step further, at least we hope to have shown them how to hold on to what they believe is significant and let drop what they consider is not, but always, of course, after reflecting on it. We all learned from this programme – what more can we ask for?

Academic results

Our marking system goes from 0 (minimum) up to 10 (maximum).

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Honors can be given to 1 out of every 20 registered students. In our case, there were 85.
Total number of students who followed the programme: 78 (100%)
Honors: 5 students, the maximum allowed (6%)
From 9–10: 59 students (76%)
From 7–8: 14 students (18%)
These percentages have been similar in all the courses given during the last eight years.

Acknowledgements

To all the people who have participated/collaborated during all these years, directly or indirectly, in this programme, especially to the students (we avoid saying "our").

We also want to thank the various Nordic Conferences on Developing Autonomous Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom, especially to Leni Dam for introducing us to this gratifying world.

Part V

The curriculum

Recent curricular reforms in many countries have emphasized the importance of learner independence as a central educational goal – witness, for example, the Danish reforms that are referred to in several papers in this collection. But these reforms do not always recognize that learners can become independent only by being independent; in other words, that the educational goal constrains pedagogical method. The last paper in the book confronts this issue, with particular reference to under-achieving learners. Candelaria Torres Diaz describes a new component in the secondary curriculum of the Canary Islands, "workshop to develop learner autonomy", which is founded on the argument that under-achieving learners will gain more from learning how to learn than from additional ("remedial") teaching.

A workshop to develop learner autonomy

(Taller de fomento de la autonomiá de aprendizaje)

Maria Candelaria Torres Diaz

Introduction

The Education Authority in the Canary Islands has recently introduced an option entitled "Taller de Fomento de la Autonomía de Aprendizaje" (workshop to develop learner autonomy) as part of the official curriculum for compulsory secondary education at both the first and second stages. The authority has been persuaded to make the development of learner autonomy a curricular subject with its own identity and characteristics because of some worrying evidence: an alarming number of pupils coming into secondary education have failed to master the abilities and skills central to primary education. This is despite the fact that learner autonomy is specified as one of the general objectives of each stage of education under our present system, and that it is to be developed through all the subjects in the various official curricula. Such pupils are inevitably at a disadvantage when they begin their secondary schooling. They may evince lower cognitive levels because they lack knowledge of learning strategies or are unable to use strategies efficiently. The solution does not lie in simply reinforcing subject content when pupils experience difficulties, but more importantly in getting to the root of the problem. In other words, we need to help pupils to become skilled in certain learning procedures, improve their learning strategies, encourage a positive attitude to learning – in short, teach them to learn for themselves.

It is our view that learner autonomy should play a key role in the teaching-learning process, and that it should not be seen as a focus of methodology as is usually the case. It should be regarded as a fundamental capacity to be developed in all pupils throughout their school career. We agree with Little (1991, p.4) when he states that "autonomy is not merely a matter of organization, does not entail an abdication of initiative and control on the part of the teacher, is not a teaching method, is not to be equated with a single, easily identified behaviour, [… but] is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts."

As mentioned above, the general aims at each stage in the curriculum always make reference to the development of learner autonomy and how it is to be achieved in all subject areas. The following quotations clearly show this.

At the nursery/pre-school stage, Objective 2 states that "the child should act with ever-increasing autonomy in his or her day-to-day activities, progressively building up his or her sense of emotional security and developing initiative and self-confidence". Objective 2 at primary level continues in the same vein with: "The child is to act autonomously in day-to-day activities and in group work in particular. The ability to take the initiative and establish relationships is to be developed further." In compulsory secondary education, Objective C states the following: "The pupil is to obtain and select information using all available sources and make use of it in an autonomous and questioning manner according to pre-established aims [...]." Objective E continues similarly: "The pupil should thus be able to develop a balanced self-image in accordance with his or her personal characteristics and possibilities. He or she should be capable of carrying out activities in an autonomous and balanced manner; effort and overcoming difficulties are to be especially valued." Finally, Objective E of higher secondary education alludes to autonomy as follows: "Developing personal, social and moral maturity which enables pupils to act in a responsible and autonomous fashion."

Although learner autonomy has been defined as an "ability" to be developed throughout the various stages of education, in our case we have decided to consider it as another means of treating diversity. Autonomy is to be incorporated into the curriculum as an option for pupils in compulsory secondary school, and particularly for those who come into categories to be explained later.

It goes without saying that, for teachers, "developing learner autonomy in the classroom" is an aid to treating diversity. Take the term mixed ability, for example. We may consider this term to refer not only to differences in learning abilities but also to differences in other areas which may have greater repercussions for what happens in the classroom. These other areas include motivation, interests, needs, general educational background, learning styles, age, external factors, study time available, anxiety, and so on.

As Ainslie (1994) says:

> As teachers, we need to be able to explain the basics to those who need them and to consolidate them. At the same time as we are challenging and stretching the most able. We have to find ways of enabling each student to learn according to his or her preferred style. We must reassure and encourage those who lack confidence and also keep demanding, overbearing students happy without letting them dominate the class.

It is clear, therefore, that when we provide our pupils with the tools which allow them to learn for themselves, we are helping them to give free rein to their diversity both in the classroom and outside. It is also clear that the best way to achieve this is through learner autonomy.

Let me conclude this introduction by quoting a passage by Trim (1988, p.3) which sums up our view:

> No school, or even university, can provide its pupils or students with all the knowledge and the skills they will need in their active adult lives. Adult life, in its personal as well as its vocational aspects, is far too diverse and too subject to change for any educational curriculum to attempt to provide a detailed preparation. It is more important for a young person to have an understanding of himself or herself, an awareness of the environment and its workings, and to have learned how to think and how to learn.

The Spanish educational system

Our present system is in the process of being modified, with the 1970 Education Law being replaced by the L.O.G.S.E. Law (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo).The reform of the system began in 1990 and is scheduled to be fully completed in the year 2002. In the Canaries, primary and nursery education have gone over to the new system, and in secondary education the third year (the first of the second level or cycle) is to become the norm from the academic year 2001–2. As far as specialized vocational training is concerned, intermediate courses will be implemented from the year 2000–1 and advanced courses from the year 2002–3.

How the curriculum is defined and takes shape

Although the Education Law (L.O.G.S.E.) is overseen by the State and is compulsory in all the Autonomous Regions of Spain, the Ministry of Education determines only some 50% of its structure. The Education Authority of each region is free to determine another 45%, and the remainder is left up to the schools themselves. The workshop scheme was devised as part of this 45% and offered to schools in the Canary Islands as an official part of the curriculum. It is therefore being put into practice exclusively in our region and not in the rest of Spain.

Secondary education

It is perhaps useful to concentrate on secondary education, as this stage has seen the most changes with the implementation of the new system, and directly concerns the focus of this article – that is, the workshop to develop learner autonomy.

The secondary stage is made up of Compulsory Secondary Education (E.S.O) and Higher Secondary Education (Bachillerato). E.S.O. lasts four years (12-16) and has two levels or cycles. Each cycle lasts two academic years. It is a compulsory, comprehensive system and is a notable advance on the former system, in which school attendance was compulsory until the age of 14 and formed a part of General Basic Education (E.G.B.).

There are two kinds of curricula at this stage. Firstly, we have those subjects which are compulsory and common to all pupils, and secondly, there are optional subjects. In the first cycle there are two options: a second modern language or the learner autonomy workshop; two hours a week are put aside for these. In the second cycle there is a difference between third year and fourth year. In the third year the workshop is on offer again, as well as subjects such as ancient history and culture, a second modern language, work experience, the Canary Islands, rational thinking, the Spanish Constitution, human rights and obligations, and so on. Only one of these subjects can be taken and the time allocated is two hours per week.

Treating diversity

Earlier in this article, it was indicated that this workshop for developing learner autonomy had been devised as an approach to treating diversity in relation to certain kinds of pupils to be defined more closely later on. At this point, however, it is useful to emphasize that this is only one of several approaches which have been officially approved. These approaches may be summarized as follows:

1 The curriculum itself. This is the first means of treating diversity, as it is of an open and flexible nature and allows adaptation to the realities of the situations in schools and to individual differences among pupils. It is therefore possible to make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the educational needs of individuals, or even to bring about fundamental changes in the curriculum itself as a result.

2 Optional subjects. The aim of offering these is to attend to different kinds of motivation, interests and needs found among pupils. The subjects must reinforce the general working of the curriculum. Including work-related content and creating a transitional stage between work and school make it easier for pupils to enter the workforce and daily life outside school.

  2.1 The workshop to develop learner autonomy is aimed at the following kinds of pupils:
    - Those the Primary Team consider not to have developed the main skills of that stage and for whom this course is recommended in order to help with future learning.
    - Pupils who were not classified as having problems by the Primary Team, but who are showing problems in daily development and have been diagnosed as needing help by the Secondary Team.
    - Any pupil wishing to apply if it is considered more beneficial than studying the other option of a second modern language (pupils in this category may be admitted only if all 20 places in the workshop have not been filled by pupils in the first two categories).

3 Curricular diversification programmes. These are offered to pupils who have shown great difficulty in developing the abilities implicit in the objectives of the curriculum, despite various approaches. Such pupils are offered a special course.

4 Repeating an academic year. This happens when the pupil has not developed the skills required to complete the following year successfully.

5 Basic job skills programme. This is a last resort for treating diversity as laid out in the L.O.G.S.E. When all other means have failed, pupils are offered this course, which provides basic job skills training.

The workshop to develop learner autonomy

Origins

My Department, which deals with Educational Research and Innovation, highlighted the need for an approach to managing the wide-ranging diversity characteristic of any group of pupils entering secondary education. We were particularly aware of problems in Spanish and mathematics, which are core subjects of the curriculum, but also realized that the real problem went even deeper. It is closely linked to learning strategies and the mastery of basic procedures, motivation, attitude and so on. We were actually confronted with a "Catch 22" situation in that, with only two hours of timetable space for optional subjects, little progress could be made in either Spanish or mathematics.

We were also aware that this was not really an adequate solution and that other possibilities would have to be explored in order to help pupils in their learning process. The first step was to analyse the general aims of each stage in the curriculum. It soon became clear that each stage included aims which emphasized the development of learner autonomy, as can be seen from the quotations cited earlier. Further comparisons revealed that the aims and objectives of primary education were effectively repeated at secondary level, with only a slight variation in the degree of development envisaged. Our research focused on an analysis of content relating to the procedures and attitudes to be developed in primary school, and upon which secondary education was to build. This research focus showed us the way forward. The more comfortable pupils are with procedure and the better their attitude towards learning, the more capable they will be of achieving the aims of the secondary curriculum. It therefore became apparent to us that an option would have to be designed which would be practical, aim to improve basic attitudes and, following on from this, stimulate the development of learner autonomy.

Development

Having established the path to be taken, we were faced with an important challenge: how to convert learner autonomy into a subject on the curriculum. The following steps were taken:

1 Similar designs being tried out in other regions of Spain, such as "learning to think, learning to reason", were studied closely.
2 The general aims of primary and secondary education were analysed.

3 The aims to be developed in this particular curriculum were established.
4 All content relating to procedure and attitude in every subject on the secondary curriculum was researched. A selection was then made of the basics which subject teachers considered to be fundamental for a pupil to be able to achieve the minimum in that area.
5 Comparisons were then made to establish which procedures and attitudes identified were also to be found among primary school objectives, and/or were to be built on to those laid down in this first stage.
6 Content was categorized according to areas of influence (sociolinguistic, scientific-technological) and then the 20 most important aspects were selected.
7 The content from these two areas was studied collectively once more and their common points determined. The results of this appear in the official subject design plan.
8 Evaluation criteria were established.
9 A series of guidelines on methodology was drawn up.

Structure

The present design of the course is as follows:

- objectives
- content concerning procedures and attitude
- methodology
- evaluation criteria

Pupils' individual characteristics show themselves in their different rhythms and styles of learning, their motivation and interests, their personal and social circumstances, and in their varying abilities and attitudes. During basic compulsory education, the teaching-learning process should be planned so that pupils are able to develop the abilities specified under the general objectives of each stage, according to their individual characteristics. Teachers must be given the resources necessary to implement various educational solutions.

One possible option is the workshop to develop learner autonomy proposed here. The focus is on developing pupils' autonomy in learning or, in other words, on making them aware of and responsible for their own learning processes. This approach enables pupils to express their own individuality, and to find ways of making the building of knowledge easier and more personally relevant. These objectives can be defined more concretely in terms of a plan of work based on the strategies, capacities and skills that help pupils to develop their basic abilities.

The proposed content of this workshop encompasses the procedures and viewpoints common to all or most subjects in compulsory secondary education. The workshop is thus seen as an important aid to the learning process across the curriculum, and of direct relevance to the basic abilities to be developed during this stage of education. On the other hand, our workshop specification does not include conceptual content, since we consider it to be the responsibility of each teacher or educational team to decide on appropriate content from within the relevant subject areas. They are in a better position to judge what is most useful in developing the workshop, and to gauge the needs, interests and motivation of their own pupils. In other words, it is intended that the workshop should be shaped by the particular subject area, and thereby enable pupils to apply strategies they have already acquired in other fields of learning.

The curriculum under discussion in relation to this workshop is that which is common to the first and second stages of compulsory secondary education. The aim is not to develop wide-ranging content but to reinforce what is relevant to the various subject areas, through the practice of learning procedures and a focused approach that is tailored to develop ability. The structure of the workshop will thus depend on the teacher's analysis of her own pupils' particular learning needs, and their incorporation in a plan of work based on graded difficulty.

Objectives

The aim is to develop a whole range of abilities among pupils so as to make the learning process in compulsory secondary education as productive as possible. In light of this, the following objectives can be specified:

1. To acquire the basic ability to solve problems autonomously, making the pupil responsible for his or her learning process.
2. To recognize, analyse and improve the learning strategies required for carrying out a given task after detailed reflection.
3. To work in a co-operative manner and also autonomously, valuing the positive attitudes that make social interaction, group work and decision-taking possible.
4. To analyse individual work and that of others, evaluating positive

and negative aspects and suggesting improvements.
5 To carry out tasks requiring reflection and reasoning based on pupils' individual abilities which also serve to bolster their self-esteem.
6 To manipulate the mother tongue, both orally and in written work, with ever-increasing accuracy and appropriateness.
7 To be familiar with and able to manipulate mathematical terms and procedures in expressing tangible realities and in solving simple problems.
8 To find information from various sources, categorize it and reproduce it in a concise, clear and coherent fashion.

Content concerning procedures and attitude

Procedures
1 Reflection on the processes implicit in learning.
2 Development of strategies that encourage pupils to reflect on the nature of the activities to be developed (objectives, needs, demands, etc.).
3 Development of strategies which are well thought-out and which enable pupils to predict meaning from specific features and use the acquired knowledge in various learning situations.
4 Identifying and developing strategies that aid individual work, such as those which encourage adequate organization, information-gathering (distinguishing between main and less important ideas, underlining points, workplans, summaries, data processing, note-taking, card indexes, etc.), reaching conclusions and making them known.
5 Group work strategies: selecting specific problems, research, debate, proving points, collective decision-taking and assertive defence of personal opinions.
6 Design of workplans for individual and group work to solve problems and develop experiences where data have to be collected, graphically represented and categorized, and conclusions reached.
7 Use of resources to reinforce autonomous learning (dictionaries, research books, the media and other sources of information).
8 Development of strategies which encourage creativity.
9 Use of negotiation as a means of deciding upon objectives, content, methodology and evaluation of actual or planned work.
10 Identification of errors and their causes.

11 Global comprehension of oral and written texts taken from different sources.

12 Reading texts aloud, paying special attention to diction, intonation, stress, pauses, emphasis and so on, in correct Spanish and specifically in the type of Spanish spoken in the Canary Islands.

13 Preparation and production of simply structured oral and written messages: narrative, explanatory and discursive texts.

14 Analysis of different types of oral and written texts with special attention being paid to how they are organized, the intention and characteristics of the communicative situation, and other more formal aspects.

15 Use of uncomplicated measuring instruments and techniques for scale charts, International Measuring Units and other kinds of measuring units used in this Region.

16 Interpretation and drawing up of charts, graphical diagrams and plans using given information or data taken from direct observation, as well as representing information.

17 Reading and interpretation of plans and basic maps and representing simple elements in perspective.

18 Use of techniques to solve problems through simple equations, implying the manipulation and interpretation of normal numbers, negatives and decimals, using proportion and percentages.

Social and personal content

1 Improving self-esteem and self-confidence.

2 Appreciation of the basic social skills that enhance personal relations in the classroom.

3 Acceptance of team work as the best approach to carrying out communal tasks. Showing an attitude of respect and tolerance towards the norms, opinions and decisions adopted by the group, thereby encouraging dialogue and responsibility in carrying out allocated tasks.

4 Development of the attitudes and strategies necessary for accepting diversity within the group and in the classroom, creating an open and positive attitude towards the solving of possible problems between individuals.

5 Encouraging initiative, confidence and interest in exhaustive, contrastive and well-documented planning of the various activities and experiences in question, and in the care of work materials and in-

struments.

6 Interest, effort and self-motivation in the careful and systematic preparation of oral and written work according to ability, and willingness to accept the fact that making mistakes is an inevitable part of the learning process.

7 Each individual's discovery of his or her own ability to learn autonomously.

8 Appreciation of how individual work has to be organized (distribution of learning time, finding adequate research materials, etc.), and how to make the most of group work (sharing information, ideas, material and conclusions, co-operating with the other members of the group, and so on).

9 Interest in reading as a source of information, learning, knowledge and pleasure.

10 To appreciate oral expression as a means of meeting a wide range of communication needs (the transfer of information, expressing feelings and ideas, sounding out opinions, etc.) and of regulating and modifying behaviour.

11 To value language as a means of improving understanding and expression.

12 To consider mathematical terms as a way of expressing immediate reality.

13 Tolerance and respect for different ways of life and beliefs, and the ability to evaluate them in a balanced manner, etc.

14 To develop awareness of the importance of self-evaluation and evaluation in general as regulators of the teaching-learning process.

Methodology

In view of the specific aspects of methodology required by this workshop, it is important to bear the following three points in mind:

a) The primary function of the material, which is to allow pupils to develop basic procedures and strategies as laid out in the curricular plan.

b) The social nature of this material through which we aim to promote a range of skills that will facilitate pupils' normal integration into their groups or classes.

c) The compensatory aspect where the aim is to help pupils overcome difficulties in learning, and which can, where possible, be incorporated into the curriculum for this stage of education.

With these considerations in mind, the following steps are recommended in planning and developing this workshop:

The Education Team, in conjunction with the school's advisory panel, should review and choose those procedures and situations to be worked on with the pupils according to the needs which have arisen during the learning process, both within the confines of this workshop and within other subject areas on the curriculum. At the same time, the team must determine the topics and conceptual content through which these selected procedures and attitudes are to be developed. We recommend that the content be taken from the various subjects on the curriculum, since this emphasizes the compensatory aspect of the workshop and enables pupils to relate the knowledge acquired to other contexts.

Any teaching proposal must be based on the previous experience, problems and interests of the pupils, and this learning should be related to their daily life. In other words, the activities pupils are to engage in must take everyday reality as their starting-point. This enables them to assimilate the knowledge acquired and apply it in other educational contexts. The more these learning activities are related to each pupil's personal reality, the more meaningful they will be to him or her intellectually, morally and emotionally. As a result, he or she will be equipped to solve problems which arise in the context of school or the outside world.

In terms of methodology, the most appropriate approach is learning through project work as this lends itself to group work, and allows pupils to discover knowledge through searching for, analysing and selecting information. It also encourages the development of social procedures and skills.

The different types of activities must be graded according to level of difficulty so that they can be carried out effectively. The level of autonomy pupils have reached has to be taken into consideration, as well as their previous knowledge of the proposed procedures. This grading process should take the following points into account.

- It should be established how much time is required for working on the project in the classroom.
- It is not a good idea to expose pupils to too many procedures, so priority should be given to those with which they feel less confident. It is also advisable to work on specific activities so that new procedures gradually become more familiar.
- The development of individual and group autonomy in project work can be defined as a series of initially small steps which gradually

become wider apart as pupils take on more responsibility and progress towards autonomy. In line with their progression, the teacher's role shifts from figure of authority to resource for pupils in their learning process. In this way, pupils are brought towards becoming responsible for their own learning process by developing various strategies, procedures, skills and attitudes.

The activities planned for the development of each project include those procedures which pupils have already worked on, so that the new contexts can involve more and more autonomy. The tasks put forward must be designed in such a way that they can be successfully carried out by pupils of varying abilities. This is why the workshop should be seen as a series of opportunities to make learning easier on different levels, and not as a means of getting pupils to reach the same level of learning. Open activities should be planned with varying degrees of difficulty which can be tackled by pupils with differing abilities and interests.

Organizing the class into groups goes some way towards creating an atmosphere of co-operation where there is greater respect for the opinions of others and for working together on common goals. The values and limitations of others are more readily accepted. Individuals are willing to take on the responsibilities and tasks designated by the group. The norms of social interaction and democratic behaviour are readily assumed and developed. However, all of these work procedures, strategies, skills of social interaction and so on, will become second nature to pupils only if they are given the opportunity of exercising them on a regular basis, and not just occasionally. In this respect, the teacher must also play her part by illustrating good practice and showing proper respect for the rules, etc.

Within group work itself, each pupil must be stretched according to his or her ability and must be given several opportunities of demonstrating this. This is easier to achieve through group learning than through individual study.

Developing learning autonomy is a fundamental aim of the workshop. The following points are therefore of especial importance:

- Pupils must be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The main task of the teacher is to organize and provide the correct means and resources so that this autonomy can be attained.
- Pupils must be involved in the planning process at every stage, and have a thorough understanding of this and of the work and tasks

they wish to take on. This collective planning and sharing of a project and joint appraisal of results can heighten their awareness of one of the most characteristic aspects of knowledge construction: that is, sharing what we know in order to learn more and to solve problems arising from attempts to understand realities.

- Each pupil must be given the opportunity to reflect on his or her work in order to reach a certain level of autonomy. We propose therefore that there should be some classroom activities which promote both individual and group reflection, and which contribute to the process of evaluating both the pupils and the workshop. Mistakes must be regarded as beneficial to learning and should be used to adapt the learning process.

Bearing in mind the objectives of this workshop, evaluation should focus on the degree to which autonomy in learning has developed in relation to the various areas. The Education Team should take an active part in the evaluation process, so that their observations complement those of the teaching staff who are directly involved.

Evaluation criteria

Each school needs to draw up its own relevant evaluation criteria according to the profile of the pupils taking part in the workshop and any previously established criteria. However, the following may serve as a guide:

1 The proposed tasks and activities should be planned in an orderly and constant fashion with ever-increasing autonomy.
2 Any problems that arise during the activities should be identified and solutions found.
3 Group work should entail active, positive, sympathetic and creative co-operation and so encourage debate and discussion.
4 The workshop should bring about the deployment of a range of social skills that lead to an improved working atmosphere both in the classroom and in the school generally.
5 Pupils should be able to understand and express themselves in their mother tongue, both orally and in written work, with ever-increasing accuracy and appropriateness.
6 Pupils should become adept in the use of mathematical terms and procedures in expressing observable realities and in solving uncomplicated problems.
7 Pupils should know how to take measurements and select data

through observation and other sources, and know how to organize and represent these clearly.

8 Pupils should know how to carry out project work, according to their knowledge and ability, using appropriate procedures and strategies.

Conclusion

Once the curriculum was designed as described above, we faced the challenge of implementation. We knew that success would depend on training. Accordingly, training courses have been planned for Gran Canaria and Tenerife. They deal with autonomous learning and the different ways of implementing it in the classroom; learning strategies as a key to developing appropriate procedures; the use of project work; and an analysis of curricular design. These courses will last for 70 hours and will be divided into three phases: theoretical input, classroom practice, and assessment. Two teacher trainers will be in charge of the follow-up sessions, and the evaluation of "taller de fomento de la autonomía de aprendizaje" will be done through monthly coordination sessions. We look forward to hearing from the teachers to what extent this new measure enables students to achieve the general objectives of the secondary curriculum.

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All but one of the papers collected in this book were presented at the conference "Focus on learning rather than teaching: why and how?", which was held in Kraków under the auspices of IATEFL in May 1998.

The papers cover a wide range of topics in theory, practice and research and will be of interest to anyone who is concerned with the promotion of autonomy in language learning

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